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Education in its broadest sense: What do the stories, told by young men from one foster home, tell us about their upbringing (*Erziehung*), with a single male foster carer?

Colin Brough

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Moray House School *of* Education and Sport

University *of* Edinburgh

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my original work. It has not been submitted in part or whole for any other degree or professional qualification.

Signed

31 / 03/ 2020

Dated

Colin Brough

Abstract

Since the publication of the Curtis and Clyde Reports in 1946, academic discourse on parenting and approaches to raising children has been heavily influenced by psychological disciplines, such as developmental and behavioural psychology. More recently, psychological understandings are claimed to be bolstered by neuroscience. Within this 'psychologization' of parenting, attachment theory looms large. Emerging as a part of a critique on the dominance of the psychological paradigm, are philosophical perspectives on the relational aspects present in the everyday experiences shared between generations, in the wider process of upbringing. Developed through the work of German Social Pedagogue, Klaus Mollenhauer, 'upbringing' is a central concern of Social Pedagogy and reflects education in its broadest sense, through the passing on of values and beliefs between one generation and another.

This study aimed to explore the experiences of young men brought up in one foster home and raised by myself as their foster carer. In order to achieve this aim, a narrative approach was taken to interview six of my twenty foster sons; and to explore the stories told by the young men, and what these stories tell us about their upbringing within a foster family. Findings are analysed, drawing on social pedagogical ideas and, in particular, the concept of upbringing. For the purposes of reporting, findings are structured around three key areas. Firstly, an exploration on the importance of the *everyday* in upbringing, through aspects such as humour, food, values and traditions, as perceived by the young men. The important part that sports, family pets and rites of passage play also emerged as important themes. The role that these various activities play in the development of our relationships (the young men and I), are reported in this section through another facet of social pedagogy, '*the common third*', as shared activities and interests that are co-invested in by both parties. Second, is a focus on relationships and the significance of fluid and flexible relationships. Birth and foster family networks, as well as the professional relationships in their lives, such as with social workers and teachers, are discussed through the young men's' reflections on the people in their lives and the part they have played in their upbringing. The third and

final area is an account of how the young men construct family. In this section perceptions of deficit norms associated with life in foster care are challenged. They are discussed through culture, as understood within social pedagogy and are used in their broadest sense to encapsulate our everyday lives, language and values.

Primarily, and perhaps most importantly, this study contributes empirical knowledge to an otherwise largely theoretical literature on the mechanisms, processes and consequences associated with raising children in foster care and highlights the importance of a social perspective on this. The thesis offers first person accounts of life in foster care and posits the important perspective of everyday activity, flexible relationships and a lexicon that allows for discussions of a life in care that is not located in a deficit model. These three perspectives help to challenge the dominance of a psychological paradigm on attachments for young people in foster care. The thesis also presents a unique methodological perspective, where two of the key agents in an intergenerational relationship are also participant and researcher, as both foster sons and foster father.

Keywords: Upbringing, Foster Care, Social Pedagogy, Foster Fathers, Single Fathers, Reflexivity

Dedication and Acknowledgements

There are several people that I would like to acknowledge and thank, as this study would not have been possible without them:

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Background to this study

Making sense of who we are and where we come from is at the heart of belonging and forming social relationships (Lambert *et al.*, 2013). Making sense of our lived experiences, both to ourselves and others, requires points of reference that allow for a common understanding of those experiences, and to some extent, societal perceptions on norms of family, relationship, and the process of growing up. However, what if those lived experiences and relationships were outside these societal perceptions of family norms and growing up? What if, for a range of possible reasons, you are growing up in the care of the state and being raised within the care system by other adults, other than your birth parents. Under these circumstances, how do young people make sense of their lived experiences and relationships and communicate these with others. To date, there have been no studies exploring care experienced young peoples' perceptions of what these mechanisms may be, or indeed, any attempts to identify a language or point of reference, to discuss growing up in care that is not located in a deficit perspective. It is within this gap that this thesis aims to contribute. This thesis investigates the experiences of young men from one foster family in order to attempt to understand the mechanisms and processes involved for them, being raised in foster care. In order to do so, I add to a growing line of discussion on 'upbringing' or *Erziehung* as a conceptual framework to analyse and describe the processes involved in growing up in care. Drawing the work of German Social Pedagogue, Klaus Mollenhauer, 'upbringing' is a central concern of Social Pedagogy and reflects education in its broadest sense, through the passing on of values and beliefs between one generation and another (Mollenhauer, 2014). I take a unique methodological approach to this study, as I am both researcher and foster father to the participants. Drawing on forms of an insider epistemology to privilege the importance of understanding relationships in this topic; this thesis identifies the importance of intergenerational relationships, everyday living and the use of language and its meaning, as central processes in an education in its broadest sense, and approaches this through the research question:

What do the stories told by boys and young men from one foster home, tell us about their upbringing by a single male foster carer?

Since the publication of the Curtis and Clyde report in 1946, academic discourse on raising children has been predominantly underpinned by a reliance on psychological disciplines, in which, attachment theory holds court (eg Bowlby, 1951; Bowlby, Ainsworth and Bretherton, 1992). The dominance of attachment theory in academic discourses and social work practice on children growing up in care has been critiqued (Smith, 2013; Smith, Cameron, & Reimer, 2017; Tizard, 2009), and this literature provides some of the conceptual context for this thesis. In the following section I outline how recognition of the limits of attachment theory as a way of understanding the experiences of the young men I fostered led me to social pedagogy as a more useful conceptual framework for making sense of the lives of young people in care.

1.2 An attachment to attachment theory

In its conceptualisation, attachment theory focussed on the harm caused to young people by maternal deprivation, 'whether through separation, or too many changes of, or absence of, a mother figure' (Tizard, 2009 p902), Bowlby concluded that children require intimate, warm and continuous relationships with their mothers, or with permanent substitute mothers (p903). Bowlby's concept of attachments also drew on Winnicott's (1948) analysis of the 'vitally important qualities of the mother, the first being that she exists, and continues to exist' (Boddy, 2013 p21), to establish the importance of the maternal bond above all others. Also of interest in the foundation of attachment theory, are importance of the age and stage of a child's development; Bowlby's critical period for a meaningful relationship with mothers was between six to thirty months, 'Mothering is almost useless if delayed until after the age of two, the child will grow up psychopathic, or at least affectionless, and unable to form close relationships with others' (Bowlby in Tizard, 2009 p903). Although, by 1956 Bowlby had openly acknowledged the limitations of identifying this early stage of childhood, as a critical period in attachment (Smith *et al.*, 2017; Tizard, 2009). There is a growing critique on attachment theory, from its failure to acknowledge the role of social class

and the social context of where a child is being raised; to a focus on mothers, in determining life outcomes for children through the provision or denial of love and affection, within the first years of a child's life (Kagan, 1995). Indeed, any suggestion that children who are deprived love and affection in the early stages of childhood, cannot be rectified later and in adolescence, has been challenged *(Rutter et al.*, 2007). Rutter studied the impact of early neglect on Romanian orphans, that are now adopted and recovering through warm and loving stimulus (Smith *et al.*, 2017). Attachment theory has also been given apparent scientific credibility from neuroscience, as brain scans have been presented as providing evidence of healthy or unhealthy attachments (Smith *et al.*, 2017). However, as Smith *et al.* discuss, the relationship between images of brains and healthy attachment or neglect is problematic (p1612). Drawing on the work of Burman (2008) on the deconstruction of developmental psychology, Smith *et al.*, note that establishing links between early childhood experiences and the formation of the anatomy of the brain, remain causally challenging to establish. Whilst attachment theory has made, and continues to make, an important contribution to understanding the psychology of parenting; a perceived scientific credibility and an almost unchallenged sixty-year dominance in discourses around relationships between parents and children, have obscured three important aspects. Firstly, attachment theory offers no perspective on the role of sociological aspects for young people in the development of meaningful relationships; it offers no insights on the mechanisms involved in developing these relationships with others. Secondly, attachment theory denies young people, particularly adolescents, agency and autonomy in creating and maintaining meaningful relationships, as it presumes at adult facilitated relationship. Finally, like much of the discourse around growing up in care, it is entirely located in deficit perspectives of missing parents and substitute roles, rather than the creation of new relationships that perhaps do not model existing understandings of what exists between adult and child intergenerationally.

The authors cited above, and others, have established the growing critique on the overreliance of this one theory in policy and practice around care experienced young people. This study is part of this emerging critique on the dominance of attachment theory. The aim of this thesis is to provide a fresh view of life in foster care through

more sociological perspectives on everyday life and relationships. To do this, I draw on the first-hand experiences of young people growing up in foster care and the relationship, as perceived by them, of me as their upbringer and the role of everyday living in developing a sense of belonging. The processes of intergenerational relationships and everyday experiences are central to the concept of upbringing, as developed through the work of German Social Pedagogue, Klaus Mollenhauer (Mollenhauer, 2014). Upbringing (*Erziehung* in the original) means education in its broadest sense, through the passing on of values and beliefs, between one generation and the next. I now move on to give an account of my role as a foster carer and one half of the intergenerational relationships discussed here.

1.3 Researcher story

In section 4.6 I set out a working definition and justification for my reflexive approach to this study as a researcher. Reflexivity involves a continuous conscious scrutiny on the 'role of the beliefs and values held by researchers in the selection of research methodology for the generation of knowledge and its production as a research account' (Hellawell, 2006 p483). Here, I provide a portraiture of my role as a foster father, which may help to provide some insights, as to my values and beliefs. The use of portraitures in research involving stories and relationships is not uncommon (Barrett & Stauffer, 2009; Humphreys, 2005), and allows me to lay the foundations for both the research question and my role as researcher. I begin with a brief story on my journey to become a full-time foster father.

It would be a considerably less complicated story to provide, if the account of journey to becoming a single foster father had followed a clear, sequential and linear process. However, the actual story is messy, complicated and overlapped by many other aspects in my life, such as employment, relationships and a challenging work life balance. At the start of the story in the 1990s, I was self-employed as the CEO of a medium sized marketing agency with around thirty-five employees. During this period, I was in my early thirties and work seemed to be the most important aspect of my life; my priorities were the thirty-five people I employed, their mortgages and families that they had to

provide for. Company life began to settle into longer term securer contracts and work pressures eased enough for me to reflect on my work life balance. In what became a pivotal moment in becoming a foster father, whilst driving home from work, I saw an advert for fostering on the back of an Edinburgh bus. After my initial contact with the social work department, I went through the family report process, referred to as a 'Form F' (The Scottish Government, 2009). Interestingly, from a professional relationship perspective, the social worker who completed my Form F, remained my social worker for the next fifteen years, until he retired. He was also my worker during the placement times for all the participants in this study.

Within the local authority, at the time of my application, there were only two other single male carers. I had the opportunity to meet them and to talk about aspects of their lives and looking after other people's children. I was still heavily involved with the company and wanted to become a respite carer for one weekend a month. My Form F took almost a year to complete and the training provided by the social work department covered a range of topics from safe caring, working with birth families and dealing with accusations. At the end of the process, the Form F report includes a recommendation to the panel on what age, sex and the number of children I could look after; and is referred to as the carer's remit (The Scottish Government, 2009). My remit was originally set at two teenage boys for one weekend a month on respite care. In the process of completing the Form F, my social worker and I had talked about safe caring and managing my safety as well, and how this might work as a single male. My social worker and I agreed that two older children, possibly siblings, may help with safe caring, as they will be more self-aware and avoid a one on one situation with only the young person and myself at home. At the time, we agreed only boys, as caring for teenage girls seemed to add an extra dimension of complexity for me as a single male carer, in terms of their developmental needs through puberty. However, with the benefits of hindsight and writing this now, this seems slightly naïve, as there could have been similar issue with the boys. Three years into respite care, I made the decision to step back from company life and to become a full-time foster father. The decision was made during a difficult period for marketing companies in the run up to the 2006 crash, as well as my growing love of my role as a foster father. I sold the agency

components (intellectual properties, brand development programmes) to the company's clients and closed the company. I remained a consultant working for other agencies, often across the same client base. This provided an income for me and allowed me to pick and choose projects, as well as becoming a full-time single foster parent. My life work balance swung almost completely in the other direction and my focus on looking after the boys pushed me towards starting my Masters in Education, exploring the role of the local authority as a corporate parent and its ability to identify and meet the needs of the children in its care (Brough, 2012). My Masters in turn, led to further questions about growing up in care, which in turn provided the basis for starting this thesis.

1.4 Care context

The care context in this study is foster care and specifically our foster family. As specified in the previous section, my remit started as a respite carer looking after two boys aged 12 plus. Foster carers return to panel every three years for a review and to revisit their remit. The maximum number of children that can be accommodated in one foster family is three, although I have (at the department's request) stretched remit on more than one occasion for short periods to help the social work department. All the participants in this study span the period where my remit was for three young people aged 8 plus and the provision to provide respite when needed. Throughout this thesis, I refer to the participants as 'the boys', despite all of them being over 18 at the time of interview, this was the collective noun used in our family and has remained so to date.

1.5 Thesis outline

My thesis follows a conventional format and is structured by eight chapters. In this, the first chapter, I have provided some insights to the rationale for the study, my journey to becoming a foster carer and the care context. I now move on to give an overview of each of the chapters.

Chapter 2 provides the historical context and story of foster care in Scotland. In order to do this, I link the historical twists and turns in the legislation that has shaped

fostering in Scotland, from the 1845 Poor Laws to the Scottish Governments aims to address the needs of all Scotland's children by getting it right for every child (GIRFEC), within the Children (Scotland) Act 2014. This review of Scotland's unique history of caring for children living out with their families of origin, is navigated through a complex policy development from UK Government and the development of the Scottish Office, and then on to Scottish independence in July 1999.

In Chapter 3, I provide a review of the literature around social pedagogy and, upbringing, as a central concern of this sociological perspective on children and education in its broadest sense. My literature review focuses on what we currently know from empirical studies on the topic of foster children. Current studies focus on maintaining contact with birth family, as well as educational and health outcomes for care experienced young people. Thereafter, I review the literature on the language of family and family membership; and how this can establish norms that can problematise an ability to account for a life growing up in care for young people in our care system. I close this chapter with a brief introduction to the recently published independent care review in Scotland. Whilst it is too early to discuss the impact of the review on policy and practice within our care system, I have highlighted key areas in which this thesis may contribute knowledge.

I give an account of my methodology in Chapter 4 and follow a conventional structure to do so. I begin by revisiting the context and purpose for this study, before providing both the theoretical underpinnings and strategies used. This interpretivist approach taken generated qualitative data through narrative methodology. I provide a detailed account of the participants in the study, including their placement details, whilst in our foster family. Given the proximity of my roles as both foster father and researcher, transparency, and an account of the position of insider researcher is provided in a detailed reflexivity section. Chapter 4 closes with a review of the ethical approaches taken and a discussion on the importance of addressing both procedural and practice ethics that were required in this study.

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 provide the main findings from this study. All three findings chapters were developed from key areas of social pedagogy: relationships, values and beliefs, and the importance of everyday experiences in growing up. All three areas contribute to upbringing, as defined in social pedagogy, and particularly the work of Klaus Mollenhauer. In the first of these finding's chapters, I report the themes that emerged around relationships as central to upbringing.

Chapter 5 provides an account on the key findings on influential relationships, as perceived by the boys. The chapter opens with some interesting insights on the use of the word 'dad', how this is fluidly and flexibly handled by the boys when talking about birth father or myself, how they deal with questions from other people about me and what aspects of fathers are role modelled for the boys by both birth father and myself. Chapter 6 also includes the findings on the boys' perspectives on birth family, particularly mothers and grandparents; as well as some interesting insights on relationships with professionals, such as teachers, social workers and sports coaches.

In Chapter 6, I explore the important findings that relate to values and beliefs, as passed on from one generation to the next. This chapter is reported in three sections, looking at values and beliefs in our foster family, birth family and the boys' perceptions of the values and beliefs held by the systems and professionals in their lives. Specifically, I discuss the role of educational values, networks of opportunities and the role of grandparents' values in the boys lived experiences. I also report the findings that relate to the boys' attempts to break a chain of perceived negative events with birth family values associated with education and employment.

Chapter 7 introduces the third key set of findings on the importance of everyday activities in the development of the relationships discussed above, through the sharing of the values and beliefs highlighted in the previous chapter. From the role of food and traditions, to sport and physical activity and on to rites of passages, such as learning to drive; this chapter explores the boys' perceptions of everyday experiences as a process of relationships and belonging.

In Chapter 8, I draw together the findings from the previous three chapters to discuss the important contributions this thesis makes to foster care. In this thesis, I evaluate foster care, and the dominant discourse on attachment, to one of upbringing through everyday experiences and relationships. In doing so, this thesis provides empirical evidence that young people can clearly and decisively articulate their own agency, when choosing who influences their upbringing. The role that single carers (specifically male carers in this study) can have in the creation of new family and belonging through upbringing; rather than joining an existing family, is also an important aspect to emerge. Chapter 8 closes with the implications for professions, such as social work, education, and carers themselves, in repositioning the essential role of relational day to day experiences for care experienced young people, as paramount. The implications are for training, daily practice and policy development. This final section within Chapter 8 also holds the recommendation for further study into the role of professional relationships for care experienced young people and studies exploring upbringing for young people by researchers who are not approaching the topic as an insider. I now move on to the second of these chapters and my account of foster care history in Scotland and the legislation that shaped it.

Chapter 2 - The legislative framework and history of fostering in Scotland

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I provide an account of the history of foster care in Scotland and the legislation that has influenced and been shaped by it. It is presented in four sections, each bounded by significant legislative milestones. This history must be understood in the context of Scotland's legislative powers. The separate governments of Scotland and England were abolished by the 1707 Acts of the Union, and a single parliament was created in Westminster London (The Scottish Government, 2016). Scotland retained certain key features, such as a separate church and legal system (Scottish Government, 2016). In 1885, the Scottish Office was established, as a department within the Westminster government dealing with Scottish matters, such as education and social welfare until the reestablishment of the Scottish Parliament in 1999. The outcome of the Scottish referendum on the 11th September 1997 was 74% in favour of a Scottish parliament with devolved powers (including local government, education and training and social work), which led to the Scotland Act 1998, and the establishment of the Scottish Executive, which was convened on the 1st July 1999. The Scottish Executive has been officially referred to as the Scottish Government, since August 2007 (Scottish Government, 2016).

Each of the following timeline sections is bound by significant events that shaped the lives of children who were brought up out with their birth families. In section one, the early 19th Century Poor Laws to World War One, I give an account of Scotland's history of dealing with destitute children by removing them from the squalor of city life to what was considered a healthier upbringing in a rural setting. Section two covers the period of global hostilities of both World Wars, and the displacement of children from their families, as they were evacuated from central Europe. Section three covers the period from the Second World War up to the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968. The fourth section in this chapter looks at the period following the 1968 Act, up to the present time. In this section, the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 the key legislation that builds on the 1968 Act is discussed. This period reflected growing public concern with children's needs and the legislation of the time reflects this. This fourth section closes

with a review of the Children (Scotland) Act 2014 and the role of GIRFEC in identifying and meeting the needs of looked after children in Scotland. As mentioned in the introduction, whilst I have and will continue to refer to the cohort of young people that are the focus of my study, as 'care experienced', in this section I have used the term 'Looked After', as this remains the legal term.

Before moving onto the first section of the timeline, it is important to establish the reason for the depth and breadth of the discussion of legislation provided in this chapter. A critical reader may question the need for such scope in time and topic, within the aims of this study. However, it is my aim to provide a policy landscape that contextualises my discussion on the tensions between the history of deficit orientation in welfare legislation and the need for a re-orientation around the educative concept of social pedagogy and upbringing within foster care (Mollenhauer, 2014). This chapter provides a discussion of the protectionist legislation for children aimed at socially stigmatised and disadvantage young people. I then move towards specific legislation that revaluates the child as active and competent to make decisions about their care, or indeed, revaluates everyday life in fostering as educationally valuable. Whilst these aims are currently unfulfilled in the Scottish legislation, at the time of writing, the Independent Care Review (ICR) has just been published and calls for reframing of the legislation that moves closer to these aims for Scotland's care experienced children. I discuss the implications of the ICR in section 8.5.1 on the implications for policy from the findings in this thesis. I now move on to the first of these timelines and the 1845 Poor Laws.

2.2 The 1845 Poor Laws to the outbreak of World War One

The Poor Law (Scotland) Act 1845, was an amendment from the Poor Law Act 1834 for England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The 1834 Act, according to Paterson, was inadequate for purpose, 'for the amendment and better administration of laws relating to the relief of the poor in Scotland' (Paterson 1976, p171). Unlike the UK's 1834 Act, which focused on institutional care and the building of new workhouses (Macdonald, 1996), the Scottish 1845 Act retained the existing Scottish administration of poor relief through the parish system, and a preference for 'boarding out'. Boarding out involved children being separated from their parents and relatives and being placed in a 'moral

environment', such as a croft or farm, where the inhabitants were seen as God-fearing, hardworking people with clean houses (Barnardo n.d.; Abrams, 1998). The importance of religion and of a work ethic reflected society's view of a good upbringing for a child at this time. The 1845 Act allowed parishes to raise funds for the poor, excluded the 'able bodied' from poor relief and recommended the development of a central Board of Supervision in Edinburgh (Ferguson, 1948). The Board of Supervision, later the Local Government Board, was an authority established to oversee implementation of the 1845 Act. It was made up from the Lord Provosts of Edinburgh and Glasgow, as well as three Sheriffs selected to represent agricultural, industrial and highland areas across Scotland (A. Paterson, 1976). From its base in Edinburgh, the Board helped to organise the appointment of parochial boards in the 880 parishes across Scotland (Paterson, 1976). The UK's 1834 Act, with its focus on indoor relief, which took the form of a workhouse or poorhouse, was intended to act as a deterrent to the able-bodied unemployed from claiming relief (Macdonald, 1996). However, in Scotland, 'such a consideration could hardly arise since such applicants were expressly debarred from demanding relief as a right' (Paterson 1976, p178), under Scottish law, and in order to be eligible for poor relief, a 'pauper' was a person who was both disabled and destitute (Paterson, 1976).

A central role of the Board of Supervision was the care of deserted or orphaned children. Boarding out, which was the closest approximation to normal family life, involved children under the poor law being placed with families, who would receive a small remuneration to look after them (Macdonald, 1996). In Scotland, this was often the crofting community, as rural areas were judged to provide healthy environments for children (Chance, 1897). Writing at the end of the 19th century Chance commented 'The advantages of ordinary family life are, in my opinion, quite sufficient to counterbalance a great deal of roughness' (Chance, 1897 p92). I discuss the tensions present in perceptions of 'ordinary families' versus 'foster families' in section (8.4). Here, my review of the literature suggests this period saw the beginning of tensions in the complex relationship between state, parents and children. The more detailed intricacies of state intervention in family life are expanded in the discussion on 1908 Act below. The following extract from the Governor of Edinburgh City Poorhouse reported in a select committee meeting in 1868, gives an indication of the tensions:

> When a woman is found not to be doing well, it becomes a sort of [separation] of evils between the taking of the child and allowing the child to remain. The child is taken to try and save the child, and the mother is left to her own courses (The Select Committee, 1868).

In the period between 1845 and the First World War, 80 to 90% of Scottish Children, who came under the care of the Scottish Poor Law board, were boarded out (Macdonald, 1996). The 1876 Poor Law (Scotland) Act, an update to the 1845 legislation reaffirmed Scotland's preference for foster care over residential care (Abrams, 1998). There are examples in Scotland's history of systems and approaches that demonstrate this commitment to the avoidance of residential care. One such approach was the Aberdeen system (Seed, 1973), which placed children, offender or otherwise, in Industrial feeding schools. This system was part of a movement, driven by the Free Church of Scotland and a desire to demonstrate a constructive Christian service in the community that sought to challenge residential child care, in favour of a system of education and sustenance for children during the day, before returning them to their birth families in the evening (Seed, 1973). Seed goes on to say that 'we might describe this as "community-based day care", in modern language' (Seed 1973, p322). Industrial feeding or 'ragged' schools, of which the Aberdeen system was part, sought to improve life at home through spiritual instruction of the children in their charge (Petrie, 2013; Smith & Whyte, 2008):

> The family is the place ordained by God for the training and upbringing of children and this is an ordinance which man can never impinge with impunity … family ties are the foundation laid by the Creator himself for the good order of society; whatever tends to break them up, to separate children from their parents, bothers from their brothers and sisters, must be evil. (Smeaton, Revd G 1869, cited in Seed, 1973 p324)

Whilst children attended the school for twelve hours a day through the summer and eleven hours during the winter (Watson, 1896), there were tensions in the movement, as to whether compulsion to attend was required, to avoid 'addiction to vagrant habits' and whether a residential route, similar to the models in England, should be taken (Carpenter, 1851 cited in Urquhart 2005, p33). The late 1800s, also sees the first use in the literature on fostering, of the term 'upbringing', as seen in Rev Smeaton's

comments above. Upbringing is threaded throughout the literature in the rest of this chapter and is central to the research question for this thesis. A full definition, deeper discussion and analysis of the term is provided in the chapter on social pedagogy in section (3.2).

Up to the end of the 19th century, England and Wales had favoured poor law institutional care, for several reasons, including an aim to avoid making care an attractive option for some parents, whose living conditions included extreme poverty, hunger, illness and an inability to look after their children's well-being. The state's aim to ensure conditions in the workhouse were worse than those at home, as a deterrent to claiming poor relief, was a concept known as less eligibility (Levene, 2009). The principle of 'less eligibility' was a central aspect of the 1834 Poor Law, it 'reflected the aim that public relief be a last resort, 'less eligible' to the recipient than the mini mother subsistence they could obtain without' (Levene 2009 p323). However, the UK government was moving towards an improved welfare provision and this was reflected in the legislation at the time.

The Children's Act 1908, which applied to the entire United Kingdom, gave a new focus on children by providing a legal and social definition for children. Some historians have referred to this period as the beginning of a welfare state (Hendrick, 1994). The extract from Humphry below, highlights the awareness of this new focus and lays the foundations on which I discuss the tensions between parents and the state, mentioned earlier and discussed in more detail below:

> The main principle of this Act appears to be the great value of children both as individuals and as members of the nation, and the importance of their being properly cared for, both morally and physically. The duty of giving this proper care belongs to the parents … there are, however, too many expectations to this natural and beneficial law. There are children who are boarded out with strangers, or who parents neglect them in various ways, or who partly on account of this parental neglect commit various offences against society (Humphry 1909, p198).

There are two aspects of this quote that require further discussion. First, is the complex relationship between child, parent and the state. The 1908 Act included various

provisions for increased protection in infant life, for juvenile law and guidance for reform and industrial schools (Stewart, 1995), the role of education as a key part of the state's guardianship, is detailed below. Central to the 1908 Act, was a view of children as the future capital of the nation. However, this view also introduced a tension between the state, as a guardian of this newly defined 'capital' and traditional views of the family structure (Hendrick, 1994). In Scotland, there were key individuals that perceived the state's intrusion into parental rights, as questionable. Critics at the time included a soon to be Lord Advocate, Thomas Shaw, commenting on the 1908 Act, '… such clauses are a strong interference with the liberty of the subject' (Stewart 1995, p94). In addition, others saw the increased role of the state and the powers within the 1908 Act, as a method to 'strike terror into the hearts of the careless, or those who were neglectful of their duties of motherhood' (Sir Henry Craik, cited in Stewart 1995, p94). It should be noted that history has placed mothers at the centre of these issues and there is little or no mention of fathers. An integral part of the mechanism that delivered this state control, was education. Industrial schools, were originally established in 1866 to deal with children who were neglected, shifted the philosophy of the feeding schools, which had not differentiated between offenders and non-offenders (Stewart, 1995). The 1908 Act blurred the distinction between the two, and certain types of offenders could be transferred to industrial schools, 'should their moral environment be deemed unsuitable' (Stewart 1995, p92). Indeed, transfers between both types of schools became possible (Stewart 1995). Part IV of the 1908 Act includes a provision for all school managers to exercise increased degrees of supervision over the children in their charge, even whilst the child is out with the school walls (UK Parliament, 1908).

The second aspect of the 1908 Act that requires closer scrutiny is the criminality of children. The 1908 Act brought about the abolishment of imprisonment for children under fourteen, apart from exceptional cases (Humphry, 1909; Stewart, 1995). It also made parents financially accountable for their children's crimes, and they could be required to attend court hearings and pay any fines given (*ibid*). The 1908 Act's parliamentary sponsor, Herbert Samuel, endorsed this inclusion of parental responsibility in a Home Office memorandum, by arguing that a punishment on the parent would strengthen a sense of responsibility and ensure more care was taken in

parental control (Wasserstein, 1992). This also added to the tensions between the state and parents, mentioned above. Samuel saw children committing crimes as 'an indictment of [their] upbringing by the parents' (Stewart, 1995, p95). The Act highlighted the importance of childhood in shaping adult lives and influenced the development of poor law foster care in Scotland. '… boarding-out became increasingly interventionist in approach, as its application was gradually extended to include not only orphaned and deserted children, but also children whose parents were viewed as 'unfit''.

The outbreak of war in 1914, and the following three decades, saw a shift in emphasis from protecting children as the nation's future, to an immediate need to protect them from the present horrors of war. This protectionism encompassed children from a wide spectrum of social class backgrounds.

2.3 World War I & II

Boarding-out took on a new specific relevance after the First World War, as an additional system of public child care, covering the whole of the UK, was implemented and overseen by the Ministry of Pensions (Parker 2015). In addition to the existing childcare system for destitute children, the Ministry of Pensions' system was set up for war orphans, or children whose widowed mothers were unable to look after them. The increased use of boarding-out across England (it was already the preferred option in Scotland), was down to two key aspects, firstly, unlike the Poor Law boards, the Ministry of Pensions had no residential resources in which to house these children and secondly, the Ministry was loath to use the poor law system for children of those that had died for their country (Parker 2015). Whilst some of the children affected by the war were housed with extended family, in what we now refer to as 'kinship care', many of the war-affected children were boarded-out with foster families. The parallel boarding-out systems of the Ministry and the Poor Law Board put a strain on the number of available foster homes across the UK, however, the Ministry of Pensions was able to compete with the Poor Law Board in this area by offering better allowances to foster carers.

There was little legislative change during the First World War. The 1932 Children and Young Person's Act extended the powers of the juvenile courts in England and Wales, introduced supervision orders for children at risk and built upon the 1908 Act (Batty, D 2005). This led to the 1933 Act of the same name (England), which brought together all existing child protection law in to one Act. The Children and Young Person's (Scotland) Act 1937 then followed. Implicit in the legislation and literature relating to this period is the suggestion of a social consciousness developing on the topic of children being looked after by other families, and, ultimately, questions about those that foster and their moral qualities. For example, in Scotland, amongst the criteria in the 1937 Act for a fit person, Ch. 37 Sec 88 states:

> (b) in selecting the person with whom any child or young person is to be boarded out, the education authority shall, if possible, select a person who is of the same religious persuasion as the child or young person, or who gives an undertaking that he will be brought up in accordance with that religious persuasion (UK Parliament, 1937).

In addition to religious persuasions, section 88 of the 1937 Act contains the general provisions for children and young people committed to the care of fit persons. The 1937 Act provides the legal platform on which to develop an analysis of those who provide care and their suitability to do so. Before moving on to look at the stories of carers and those they cared for, I will address the key influences on boarding out during the Second World War. In 1939 an organization called the Refugee Children's Movement *Kindertransport* brought nearly 10,000 Jewish children to the United Kingdom and placed almost half of them in foster homes (Parker 2015). Approximately 8% of these children came to live in Scotland (F. Williams, 2013). Parker goes on to suggest that the number of evacuees and refugees in foster care might have implied that an enlarged program of boarding-out should take place for children who were currently in the care of poor law institutions. It should be noted that there were obstacles in the way of this expectation, including a multitude of conflicting policies, practices, local authorities, voluntary organizations and government departments, all of which had little co-ordination with each other and often competed for resources (Williams, 2013).

Towards the end of the Second World War, a letter from Lady Allen of Hurtwood, the then chair of the Nursery School Association, to the Times in 1944, calling for an inquiry into the poor standards and lack of a coordinated approach in services for children 'deprived of their natural parents' care [who] were being brought up in many institutions, both public and private' (Deakin 1948, p234). In essence, attacking the 'effects' of residential care on children, along with pressure from various charities and women's groups, resulted in two inquiries being announced by the government. In England and Wales, an inquiry was chaired by Myra Curtis and in Scotland the report was chaired by Lord Clyde (Deakin, 1948). The outcomes from these reports are discussed in the following section.

Lady Allen's concerns on residential care were being echoed across debates on boarding out and the suitability of those in the role of carer and whether they were a fit person to provide such care. The death of Dennis O'Neil, two months before his thirteenth birthday, in a Shropshire foster home in 1945, from starvation and beating at the hands of his foster father Reginald Gough, compounded misgivings about the standards and supervision in foster homes (Ruegger & Rayfield, 1999). This, much publicised tragedy, profoundly impacted upon the uncertainties around boarding-out in England and Wales. Sir Walter Monckton's one-man, four-day inquiry found that the Goughs had been appointed as foster carers without adequate checks on their suitability. Along with public activism on state care, Monckton's findings led to the establishment of the Committee on the Care of Children and ultimately inspired the Children Act 1948, (Hopkins, 2007) detailed below. Meanwhile in Scotland, the prosecution of Margaret and John Walton from Fife, for the wilful mistreatment of the boarded-out boys in their care, Norman and Harry Wilson aged 12 and 10, received less scrutiny, as the press at the time seemed to focus on the difficult nature of the boys. Harry Wilson was portrayed as out of control by the Walton's defence lawyer, despite Harry's headmaster testifying 'it would have been impossible to put a two-shilling pence on the white part of his body', so badly discoloured was it by bruising (Abrams, 1998, p198). Abrams goes on to state that there was so little public or judicial understanding of abuse that it was practice to attribute some, if not all the blame to the children for their behaviour (1998).

This section of the timeline has included the global impact of war and displaced children on the boarding out system. Whilst there is a growing preference for family-based care over residential care across the UK, there are also the beginnings of public concern on the quality of care. In what follows I provide an analysis of the inquiries that led to the establishment of the 1968 Social Work Act.

2.4 Key Legislation from 1945 to 1968

On the 15th March 1945 there were 14,329 children in care in Scotland, of whom:

- 4,788 were in voluntary homes (private care arrangements) inspected under section 98 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 1937 by the Scottish Home Department.
- 5,377 orphans or those deserted by/separated from their parents were boarded-out under the Poor Law in Scotland.
- 959 were in voluntary homes not covered by the 1937 Act.
- 749 in Poor Law Institutions under section 10 of the Poor Law (Scotland) Act 1934.

(Clyde Report, 1946)

Whilst there is no mention or account given for 2,456 of the total number of children in care, these figures demonstrate Scotland's continuing preference for boarding out over residential care at the end of the Second World War. A parliamentary committee, which drew on the output from the Curtis and Clyde reports was followed by the development of the Children's Act 1948 (Sen, Kendrick, Milligan, & Hawthorn, 2008), and while the remits for the two committees were slightly different, the findings were similar (*ibid*). The importance of the output from both committees, which signalled a shift from residential care to that of a family model, are detailed later in this section.

The 1948 Act, which applied to the UK, placed upon local authorities a duty to take in to care children who could not live with their parents and, where possible, to place them with foster parents rather than in residential care, which would only be used if foster care was not available and only on a temporary basis (Abrams 1998). The 1948 Act led quite quickly to regulation of children's homes in England and Wales and Northern Ireland and paved the way towards 1959, and Scotland introducing

regulation for the operation of children's homes (Sen*, et al.*, 2008). Even with the new regulation for residential care, the preference for children to be placed in foster care, particularly young children, resulted in the closure of some residential homes in some regions of Scotland (Sen *et al*). However, mapping forward from this time period, in the 1960s, a particularly high rate of foster care placement breakdowns, almost 50%, resulted in the need for both residential and foster care in Scotland (Triseliotis, 1988). It should also be noted that, whilst the Clyde report had reaffirmed a preference for foster care over residential care, the report acknowledged the need for residential homes in certain circumstances (Clyde, 1946), such as children who were exceptionally difficult, were part of a sibling group too large for a foster family or had specific care needs (Sen *et al.*, 2008).

After the publication of the Clyde report, described below, developments in children's services during the 1950's were relatively slow. White's study (1973) highlighted that, for example, Edinburgh, as a local authority, took almost 20 years to fully respond to the key recommendations in the report. Edinburgh, like many urban authorities in Scotland at this time, still held a preference for boarding the city's children out to crofts in the Highlands and Islands (Macdonald, 1996; White, 1973). There are many accounts of children moved from urban settings to live with new foster families in rural parts of the country, who often saw them as an additional pair of hands on the farm (Macdonald, 1996; Abrams, 1998). This was against the advice of the Clyde Committee, who observed that the boarding out of children to crofts in the Highlands could be seen as an industry, 'where children were often overworked by their foster parents' (Clyde, 1946 p21). The continued practice of moving young people from cities to rural areas is described in the stories told by some of the people affected by this urban migration, and the use of the 'car tours' in the 1940s and 50s. Glasgow parish often used a large vehicle, loaded up with children in their care, to travel around rural areas in the north of Scotland (Abrams, 1998). The car would stop outside rural houses, unload the children, and occupants of the house would select those they wanted. In the stories told, it is easy to empathise with the children, but perhaps mostly with the last individual in the car on these trips. Peter recalls a journey on the Oban to Tiree ferry, when his brother and he were sent to board-out on the island during the Second World War, 'we heard people speaking but we didn't understand what they

were saying, we thought they were Germans' (Abrams, 1998, p64). Peter's story about Tiree residents speaking Gaelic on their return from the Oban sales, encapsulates a little of the cultural shock experienced by children being moved from their home in the city to far flung crofts and islands. There are however, some interesting aspects of these aims for a healthy upbringing, engaging the hearts and minds of our children, that are mirrored in the aims of social pedagogy and I will explore this facet of care, through the work of Hämäläinen and Mollenhauer and an analysis of upbringing in the social pedagogy chapter of the literature review. An awareness of the developmental needs of children is highlighted in two pieces of key legislation during this timeline, the Kilbrandon Report 1964 and the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968.

2.4.1 The Kilbrandon Report 1964

During the 1950s, there was a rise in public awareness and concern around crime rates for young offenders and youth misconduct (Smith & Whyte, 2008). A committee, under the chair of Lord Kilbrandon, was formed in 1961 with the specific remit of reviewing the legal arrangements for, and to differentiate between young people who offend and those that are offended against (Smith & Whyte, 2008):

> Consider the provisions of the law of Scotland relating to the treatment of juvenile delinquents and juveniles in need of care and protection or beyond parental control and, in particular, the constitution, powers and procedure of the courts dealing with such juveniles, and to report (The Scottish Government, 2013).

The above extract is taken from the Kilbrandon committee remit and provides a basis on which to analyse the outcomes of this key Scottish report. The welfare of children in Scotland, regardless of whether they were 'juvenile delinquents' i.e. had been found guilty of a criminal act, or in need of care, is central to the Kilbrandon report's recommendations, which argued the 'test for action' are the needs of the children, rather than their deeds (Shaw & Kendrick, 2016). Kilbrandon argued 'the true distinguishing factor, common to all children concerned, is their need for special measures of education and training, the normal upbringing process having, for

whatever reason, fallen short' (Kilbrandon Committee, 1964, p13). Given the current political emphasis on improved communications and systems around a child with the Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC) approach, it is interesting to note, some fifty years earlier, that Kilbrandon recognised the important link between education and social welfare and recommended the development of a social education department (Francis, 2000). However, this idea was rejected in favour of an autonomous social work department established by the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 (Francis, 2000). Kilbrandon also sought to remove children from the adult judicial system and this saw the establishment of the Children's Hearing system in Scotland (Coles, Cheyne, Rankin, & Daniel, 2016):

> The Children's Hearings System is representative of Scotland's approach to care and justice decision making for children and young people, with its most fundamental principle being that children and young people who offend and those who require care and protection are equally deserving to be considered as being in need. (Coles *et al.,* 2016)

This was a radical change in the Scottish youth justice system, which took children's welfare needs out of the adult courts (McGhee & Waterhouse, 2002; McRae, 2006). The ongoing complex relationship between the law, children and the society, is the subject of a study by Bartie and Jackson (2011), whose research looked at the relationship from after the Second World War up to the Kilbrandon Report. They explored the various methods used by police in Scotland, compared to England, in post war years and conclude 'that a social welfare ethic and a criminal justice ethic were coexistent within rhetoric and practice of policing' (Bartie & Jackson 2011, p91). Macleod states that punitive approaches can be counterproductive and argues for an approach grounded in a welfare stance, that allows for compassion and understanding behaviours, rather than simplistically seeing young people as deliberately causing trouble or indeed seeing them as victims (Macleod, 2006). Both studies underpin the unique approach to Scotland's children and are representative of a Scottish culture that led to the development of the Children's hearing system.

The Children's hearing system commenced operating on 15th April 1971. A hearing involves three lay volunteer panel members and requires children, parents, social

workers, carers, educational professionals and panel members to discuss the young person's difficulties and needs, referral and what the solutions could be (Aldgate & Hill, 1995). In addition to the panel members, each hearing has a Reporter - an independent official who is 'both competent to assess both legal and the wider question of public interest' (Scottish Government, 2013, p14). The Reporter asks the social work department to gather evidence to support grounds on which a decision for compulsory measures of care are made (Scottish Government, 2013). Anyone present at the hearing, including children and their parents, has the right to appeal against decisions made, and these appeals are heard by a Sherriff (Tisdall, 1999). This process is located within the hearings' jurisdiction as a tribunal (Scottish Government, 2013). Specifically, in terms of foster care today, it is the Children's Hearing system that places children in foster care by disposal, or as a voluntary arrangement under Section 25 of the 1995 Children in Scotland Act, detailed below (The Scottish Office, 1995). The Kilbrandon Report laid the foundations for the hearing system through the Social Work (Scotland) 1968 Act, and I now move on to discuss this in more detail.

2.4.2 The Social Work (Scotland) 1968 Act

As stated earlier, the Kilbrandon Report recommended a social education approach, but this was diluted in favour of a comprehensive social work department providing welfare provision for all ages (Smith and Whyte, 2008). The rejection was in line with the White paper, Social Work and the Community 1966, which echoed 'the strength of the social work lobby during a period of social optimism' (Smith & Whyte, 2008). During this time the foundations laid by Kilbrandon were reflected in other aspects of children's lives, such as the comprehensive education system (Smith & Whyte, 2008):

> From that same time, too, we have the internationally respected Scottish system of community education, linking education, youth work and community development in an attempt to regenerate whole communities, enabling them to take responsibility for their own lives. (Paterson, 2000)

Smith and Whyte go on to argue that the dilution of the Kilbrandon aspirations for social education have left social work struggling to find a conceptual or practical formula for working with children and their families and that there is merit in Scotland

‘revisiting its heritage’ to embrace social pedagogy (see section 3.2.1) and perhaps socio-educational approaches, which are in harmony with Scottish philosophical traditions of social education (Smith & White, 2008).

The Social Work (Scotland) 1968 Act, established social work departments that hold responsibility for ‘field work’ for a wide range of services for children in the care of the local authority: at home, residential, day care, kinship and foster care (Aldgate & Hill, 1995). A key section in the 1968 Act, is the duty section 12(1): ‘it shall be the duty of every local authority to promote social welfare by making available advice, guidance and assistance’ (The Scottish Office, 1969). This duty is further detailed, as to diminish the requirement for children coming in to, or keeping them in foster or residential care, and for local authorities to provide, not only assistance in kind, but also in terms of funds (The Scottish Office, 1969). This was observed by many involved in child welfare, as a revolutionary aspect of the 1968 (Scotland) Act, which was absent from the parallel legislation in England and Wales (Tisdall, 1999). The 1968 Act laid the foundations of the social work department, and its responsibilities for looked after children, which are still present today. There are multiple reasons why a child or young person may be looked after by the local authority, which has specific responsibility and duties towards the children and young people in their charge. Children can become looked after by a local authority under a voluntary arrangement, were the child’s parents agree to the accommodation; or under compulsory measures decided at a children’s hearing (The Scottish Office, 1984). The period between the 1968 Social Work Act and the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 saw radical changes in what could be perceived as typical family structures and the legislation that supports them (Scottish Government, 2013).

2.5 1968 to current time

The last third of the twentieth century saw changes in typical family structures, such as higher rates of divorce, increased numbers of children born to single mothers, people marrying at older ages and young people becoming increasingly reliant on their parents for far longer than their teens (Tisdall, 1999). In line with increasing awareness of children's needs and a requirement to regulate fostering and children in care, the legislation in this period reflected growing public concern with the need for the law to keep pace (Tisdall, 1999). The Foster Children (Scotland) Act 1984 (The Scottish Office, 1984) set out: duties on social workers to ensure the wellbeing of and to visit foster children, as well as provisions for the disqualification of a person keeping foster children. It also gave powers to authorities to inspect foster carers' homes and to impose requirements on carers. It prohibits any advertising relating to the fostering of children, which prevents a person from indicating they will provide care and maintenance of a child in return for money (The Scottish Office, 1984). This was followed by the Boarding-out and Fostering of Children (Scotland) Act 1985, which sets out, amongst other provisions, the regulations for approval of foster carers, the functions of the panel to appoint foster carers and the payment of allowances (The Scottish Office, 1985). In the same year, and to cover aspects not addressed by the Fostering of Children Act, the Foster Children (Private Fostering) (Scotland) Regulations 1985 was passed, which places a requirement on any adult looking after a child under school leaving age for more than twenty eight days, to report this to the local authority, as it is legally regarded as private fostering (The Scottish Office 1985). The requirement places a responsibility on the local authority to investigate, where appropriate, such private fostering (The Scottish Office 1985).

Private fostering covers a far wider remit than is generally understood and includes, for example, children from overseas who attend language or mainstream schools and are staying with host families, adolescents estranged from their parents and living with friends' families, children on holiday exchanges, children of service families posted overseas, children left with partners of birth parents following a death or separation and children of parents in prison or on educational courses that are unable to care for their child whilst they are absent from the home (Holman, 2003). Both the young person and person looking after them are subject to the Foster Children (Private Fostering) (Scotland) Regulations 1985. The above list is not complete but reflects the

wide range of occasions where private fostering can take place. However, whilst the legislation provides a legal framework, there remains to date, a lack of awareness around private fostering and an underlying concern around the potential for harm in private fostering situation, where the local authority have no awareness of children's needs or welfare (Holman, 2003). Sensitive to a growing awareness of children's needs and welfare, the aims for child care service reforms were set out in the white paper Scotland's Children: Proposal for Child Care Policy and Law 1993 (The Scottish Office, 1993), in which the importance of embedding the rights of the child, founded in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), within Scots law was introduced. The UNCRC is the most widely ratified human rights treaty across the word, and has fifty four articles relating to civil, political, economic and social rights (The United Nations, 1990).

In 1990 the UK government signed the United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child (UNCRC) and declared its commitment to upholding the articles within. Key principles, which affect all children but are specifically key to children in care are:

- All rights guaranteed by the Convention must be available to all children without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status. (Article 2)

- In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration (Article 3).

- The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice (Article 12) (The United Nations, 1990).

Acknowledgement of children's rights saw a shift in Scottish law. Moving from a position that privileged parent's rights over their children 'the Scottish Law Commission's *Report on Family Law* (No 135) recommended beginning with parent's

obligations towards their children - parental *responsibilities* Article 18' (Tisdall 1999, p29).

In the twenty years following the 1968 Social Work (Scotland) Act, the changes in typical family structures described above (Aldgate & Hill, 1995), led to the necessary prioritisation of responding to crisis situations, rather than the preventative work, aspired to in the 1966 White Paper, Social Work and Community (Scottish Government, 2017). The increased demands on the social work system led to complaints from local authorities at the time, that any work to help prevent referrals, such as day care and respite, were being ignored (Hill, 1990). Local authorities also complained about the lack of funding and resources being provided by the Scottish Office, which added pressure to the social work system (*The Scotsman* 17 January 1995, cited in Tisdall, 1999). From the original Local Government (Scotland) Act 1975, which established seven large local authorities, such as Lothian and Strathclyde; a major structural change was to take place in 1996, when the existing two-tier system of local government and nine Regional councils was replaced by twenty-nine local authorities on mainland Scotland and the existing three island councils of Orkney, Shetland and the Western Isles (Tisdall, 1999).

The new local authorities were created under the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1994, and part of their remit was to address the needs of the local population through decentralised services such as housing, education and social work. The development of local authorities under the 1994 Act, was followed by a promise, by the government, to introduce new children's legislation. However, it took pressure from agencies, lobbyists and families before the government introduced the Children (Scotland) Bill in 1994, and using special parliamentary procedures, the Act was given Royal Assent on the 19th July 1995 (The Scottish Office, 1995).

2.5.1 Children (Scotland) Act 1995

The 1995 Act sets out the provisions on parental responsibilities and rights. For the first time, the rights and responsibilities of biological fathers are accounted for in the legislation. It is particularly interesting to note, that up until this point, fathers, biological and foster, are conspicuous by their absence and that mothers are reported

as the parent, and often the source of the problems bringing children in to care. In addition, the Act also deals with children's views, which was a response to international development in children's rights under the United Nations and discussed in more detail below. As well as the introduction of welfare for children and their families and the duty of a local authority towards a child looked after by them (The Scottish Office, 1995). Ultimately, the Act brought together aspects of childcare and family law and can be seen as having been influenced predominantly by the changing dynamics in typical family structures, recognition of children's needs and a focus on duty to care mentioned earlier.

The 1995 Act addressed the needs of various 'categories' of children, it was reported at the time that various agencies were disappointed to see the influence of the wider UK legislation terminology such as 'looked after by the local authority rather than being in care' (Tisdall, 1999 p33). Indeed, the restrictions of terminology such as 'children in need', 'children at risk of abuse' introduced in England and Wales through the 1989 Children's Act, began to draw severe criticisms from those involved and working with children in Scotland. These terms were stigmatising and crisis reactive, rather than the preventative vision aspired for in the Kilbrandon report and the 1968 Social Work Act, which promised the promotion of welfare legislation (Tisdall, 1999). The potential stigma that comes with some labels is addressed in this study, as I explore the meaning that terms such as 'in care' have for young people, discussed I more detail in section (3.3.2.1) and the language of family.

This period also saw the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007 (The Scottish Executive, 2007), in which section 96 specifically deals with Fostering. The Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) scheme provides a system 'whereby individuals with a known history of harm can be prevented from doing work with children and/or protected adults' (Disclosure Scotland, 2007) and came in to force in 2010 replacing the existing enhanced disclosure system. The PVG system, however, is not fool-proof, 'no matter how intensive the selection, assessment and vetting procedures … they will never be able to effectively screen out all abusers' (Kendrick, 2014). Checks on those working with children are only part of a system designed to protect children from those that would neglect them or do harm. Checks on potential

and current carers is part of a wider system around a child in care, that includes the Children's Hearing system described earlier:

> The criminal law protects children from serious physical, emotional or sexual abuse by their parents. Moreover, if a parent neglects or physically ill-treats a child, they can be made subject to a compulsory supervision order under the Children's Hearing (Scotland) Act 2011 and can, if necessary, be removed from the parents (Thomson 2011, p251).

These increased checks and measures are an indication that the care system is becoming more regulated. Part of this regulation is an acknowledgement of young peoples' voices and that they are heard. Central to the Hearing system is an increased recognition of children's views and participation in their welfare (Morrison, 2015). Section 27 of the Children's Hearing (Scotland) Act 2011, states:

> 27 (4) Without prejudice to the generality of subsection (3), a child who is aged 12 or over is presumed to be of sufficient age and maturity to form a view for the purposes of that subsection.

Whilst this subsection applies specifically to children aged 12 or over, the 2011 Act provides provision for all children and states that both hearings and sheriffs must address the views of all children in terms of their welfare, covered in subsection (3). The 2011 Act sought to clarify the term *relevant person,* with regards to Children's hearings. 'The question of who is a relevant person for the purposes of the children's hearings system' (Evans 2015, p244), has been the subject of legal debate since the term was introduced in the Children (Scotland) Act 1995. A relevant person is an individual who has the right and obligation to attend children's hearings, to receive information prior to a hearing and to appeal any decisions made (*ibid*). The 2011 Act introduced two mechanisms by which a hearing or pre-hearing could deem a person relevant. Firstly, if an individual holds parental rights or responsibility for a child, including their birth parents, then they are deemed a relevant person. Secondly, 'if a person is having, or having recently had, a significant involvement in the *upbringing* of the child, then that person must be deemed a relevant person' (Evans 2015, p245).

This aspect of the 2011 Act is of interest to this study for two reasons. Firstly, it is under this second mechanism that foster carers attend hearings, as they do not hold parental rights, the rights remain with the local authority and secondly, the term *upbringing* is key, both within social pedagogy and is central to the Kilbrandon report, and is also the source of legal debate mentioned above. In an appeal to the Inner House of the Court of Sessions, the birth parents of two children in the care of the local authority in Kirkcaldy, challenged a Sheriff's decision to deem the children's foster carers as relevant persons (A. Evans, 2015). The term *upbringing* received significant attention during the case, as the Inner House held that the existence of a foster care arrangement, in itself, was not enough to meet the criteria, rather, it required the consideration of particular circumstances. Indeed, it is not the 'involvement in a child's life or the child's care which satisfies the test, but the involvement in the child's upbringing' (Evans 2015, p247). Evans goes on to state that 'the Inner House noted, however, the word "upbringing" requires more of an examination into the facts of the person's involvement with the child' (Evans 2015, P247). Upbringing continues to be a key requirement of a relevant person in section 81 (3) of the current 2014 Act. In order to complete the legislative timeline for fostering, I now move on to the Children (Scotland) Act 2014.

2.5.2 Children (Scotland) Act 2014

The 2014 Act brought in a wide range of provisions affecting looked after children and young people, including: corporate parenting, aftercare, continuing care and services in relation to children at risk of becoming accommodated. As part of the Scottish Government's aim in 'making Scotland the best place to grow up' (The Scottish Government, 2014), there have been numerous policy developments, such as early education, care provision and improving outcomes for looked after and accommodated children, such as the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 (Davis & Tisdall, 2015, p 214). The Scottish Government has also introduced Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC), which is 'a landmark policy framework for improving children's well-being in Scotland' (Coles *et al.*, 2016 p334) and is 'strategically threaded through all existing policy, practice, strategy and legislation effecting children, young people and families' (Coles *et al.*, 2016 p355). GIRFEC aims

to improve communication and information sharing between agencies working with vulnerable young people. In order to address the needs of looked after children and young people, the Scottish Government defines *corporate parenting,* a concept first outlined in the Utting Report (Utting, 1997) , as 'the formal and local partnership needed between all local authority departments and services, and associated agencies, who are responsible for working to meet the needs of Looked After children and young people, and care leavers' (The Scottish Government, 2007). The 2014 Act requires local authorities to take responsibility for the wellbeing of children in its care and to put its own children first. In my view as a foster father and in order to do so, powerful advocacy is required on the part of the local authority to help these young people make a success of their lives. The extent to which my foster sons feel their 'corporate parents' have influenced their lives, and the nature of any such influence, is discussed in the findings sections 6.4 and 7.4 of this thesis. My Master's dissertation looked at the role of the local authority as a corporate parent and its ability to identify and meet the needs of the children in it care (Brough, 2012). The study focused on social workers' views on corporate parenting and explored identity, attachment, education and life through and after care, as the main themes. Whilst the dissertation was a small-scale study and claims to generalisability were limited, it is interesting to note that almost all of the social workers (10 out of 12) interviewed, 'saw corporate parenting a team effort, with the young person, their social worker, the foster carer and their link worker, with the carer providing a face to the corporate parent' (Brough 2012, p29).

2.6 Summary

Whilst it is not the aim of this study to provide a critical review of foster care legislation and its efficacy in supporting children and young people who grow up in care, it was important to provide some legislative context to the boys' stories in this study. The overall legislative timeline for Scottish children demonstrates the twists and turns that policy developers, implementers and service providers have taken to deal with children who are brought up in Scotland by adults, who are not their birth parents. The earlier sections of the timeline suggest a legislative compulsion with moving children from the 'evils' of urban life to the ideals of country living, which sought to improve both physical health and moral fortitude through boarding out. The next

timeline section, including the war period, brought additional challenges, in terms of available families to care, and displaced children from Europe and the UK's main cities to the safety of the country. This was followed by relatively quiet period, in terms of legislative change, until a fundamental review in Scotland by Lord Kilbrandon on children's needs over their deeds in the 1960s. A half century on from Kilbrandon's rejected recommendation, that a cohesive social education department should address care needs of children, whose normal upbringing processes has failed (Tisdall, 1999), the term 'upbringing' remains a central theme and is threaded throughout this chapter, from the earliest sections on the Poor Laws to its inclusion in my research question below.

Perhaps the most important legislative outcome from the Kilbrandon report was the 1968 Social Work Act, which brought in to force the Social Work department, so prevalent in the boys' stories, as 'them' or 'the department'. The 1995 Act sets out parental responsibilities and rights, and for the first time, biological fathers are accounted for. Their absence was, perhaps, from a contemporary perspective, obvious and placed the apparent blame for children's problems with mothers alone. The 2014 Act continued the theme of upbringing, through section 81 (3) and the requirements for a relevant person, including foster carers, to attend Children's hearings.

In this chapter I have scoped the history and legislation that has shaped foster care in Scotland. This chapter helps to lay the foundation for the first part of my research question and discussion around technical structures of foster care itself:

> ***What do the stories told by boys and young men from one foster home, tell us about their upbringing by a single male foster carer?***

I now move on provide a review of the literature to provide a clearer definition of upbringing and its use in this thesis. I will also review the literature on empirical studies that look at foster families and foster children's views on life in care.

Chapter 3- Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to contribute empirical knowledge to a growing body of theoretical understandings on how young people in care of the state, make sense and give an account of being raised by adults other than their birth parents (Cameron, Reimer, & Smith, 2016; Hodgson & Ramaekers, 2019; Ramaekers, 2018; Smith, 2013). The focus is children in foster care in Scotland, and specifically young men raised by myself, a single foster father. A conceptual framework for the research was developed by drawing on literature which met the following criteria:

- Theoretical and empirical studies that draw on upbringing, as defined in social pedagogy.
- Theoretical and empirical studies that have contributed to knowledge on how we can understand the mechanisms and processes involved in growing up in care.
- Studies that contribute knowledge to reflexive relationships and intergenerational learning.
- Studies that have contributed to our contemporary understanding of family constructs.
- Studies that have explored the experiential elements of life for children and young people growing up in care.

Given the diverse range of international literature within this review, it would be prudent to offer some context on the context. The studies span Scottish, UK, European and global contexts with some of the European and global source studies more transferable to the Scottish context than others (Menter, 2014). I have endeavoured to highlight this where it is important. With the above criteria in mind, this chapter presents a review of the literature in two main sections. The first provides the context and rationale for the use of social pedagogy, as a theoretical lens that provides a lexicon for a discussion on the processes of being raised in care. This section is underpinned by a review of the work by Klaus Mollenhauer on theoretical constructs around raising

children, as a process of *upbringing* (Mollenhauer, 2014). Within this first section, I explore the extent to which upbringing features in studies both internationally and then looking towards Scotland specifically.

The second section provides an overview of the literature on foster family life and has a focus on the current range of research in this area, from maintaining links with birth family, outcomes from care and mental health, to a review of the limited number of empirical studies exploring first person accounts from foster children. I close this second section with a review of the literature on family life, including language, membership, culture and family roles. In addition, acknowledging the specific context of the research question, focusing on a single male carer, this section also includes a review of the literature on men as fathers, foster fathers and as role models. I now move on to the first of these tasks and a review of the literature on social pedagogy and specifically upbringing and their relevance to this thesis.

3.2 Exploring Upbringing

Whilst this is not a thesis on social pedagogy, I structured my research question, analysis and reporting to reflect *upbringing* as the central thread in my study. Social pedagogy is ultimately concerned with tackling social problems through education in its broadest sense; and is concerned with how society thinks about how children are raised and is explained in more detailed below in section (3.2.1). Upbringing, is a central concern within social pedagogy and is understood as a process of raising and caring for a child through education in its broadest sense (Cameron & Moss, 2011; Mollenhauer, 2014; Smith, 2013), and it is central to my analysis of the boys' accounts of life in care with me. The literature around upbringing is reviewed in four sections. I begin with some context and an overview of Social Pedagogy (3.2.1), in which I locate my use of upbringing within this study. Next, I review the central piece of theoretical literature in my study, Klaus Mollenhauer's *Forgotten Connections* (Mollenhauer, 2014). I then move on to the first of two sections, in which I provide a review of the literature on studies drawing on the development of upbringing as a concept within social pedagogy. These sections move from a broad overview of upbringing across European and Scandinavian countries, and children in a range of

care settings (3.2.4), to an overview of literature on upbringing in a Scottish context (3.2.5).

3.2.1 Introduction to Social Pedagogy

During the early stages of this study, the aim had been to explore identity development in young people living in care. However, after reading several publications by Smith, who has written extensively on social pedagogy in the UK and specifically a Scottish context (Cameron *et al.*, 2016; Smith, 2012, 2013; Smith & Whyte, 2008); the aim of this study shifted to an inquiry on the views of young people in care, and how they make sense of and give an account of their time in care. In order to answer this question, a conceptual framework was required to provide a language, or point of reference, to discuss the boys' accounts. The concepts of *Bildung*, *Erziehung* and the common third, all of which come from Social Pedagogy, are used as the framework to analyse and discuss family and everyday life for the boys (see Chapters 5 and 6).

From its German origins, social pedagogy has made some cultural migrations into social care systems in various English-speaking countries but has arrived comparatively late in the UK (Coussee, Bradt, Roose, & Bouverne-De Bie, 2010). For example, social pedagogy's influence moved through Spain to Latin America and is now developing in the USA (Kornbeck, 2013). Within this thesis I draw a line from social pedagogy's origins to its influence on social work theory and practice in the UK (Petrie, 2013). I acknowledge the possible cultural barriers to adoption of social pedagogy in the UK, or as Kornbeck states 'is it too German for a UK context?'(Kornbeck, 2013 p58). To begin with, I provide a short overview of social pedagogy's foundation and the context for upbringing and the common third.

Whilst there is no common theory, universal definition or agreed practice and procedures for social pedagogy across Europe (Hamalainen, 2013); in Germany, social pedagogy began to be incorporated into social care in the early 1900s, with a particular focus on children and youth work (Hamalainen, 2013). However, we need to look further back to find the origins of the term social pedagogy (*sozialpädagogik*), which first appears in the work of the German educationalist Karl Mager in 1844 (Kyriacou, Ellingsen, Stephens, & Sundaram, 2009). Mager's work, *Die Theorie der gesamten,*

in einer gegebenen Gesellschaft vorkommenden Erziehung, einschließlich der Deskription der geschehenen Praxis (Petrie, 2013; Winkler, 1988), has been translated by Dr Thomas Gabriel as the 'theory of all the personal, social and moral education in a given society, including the description of what has happened in practice' (Gabriel, 2001; Petrie, 2013). Whilst there is no definitive translation for *Erziehung* in to English, it is typically rendered as Education (Friesen & Sævi, 2010). This mapping of multiple meanings perhaps explains Gabriel's apparent reluctance to sum *Erziehung* up in one English word. Such a simplistic or uncomplicated translation to 'education', and a northern European association with schooling or formal systems, offers a limited scope for what is better understood within social pedagogy, as 'Upbringing' (Cameron *et al.*, 2016), and is defined in more detail in the next section.

Having located the theoretical foundations for my use of social pedagogy in the German tradition, I must acknowledge current tensions and debate in Germany on what constitutes or defines social pedagogy (Sandermann & Neumann, 2018). Indeed, there are a variety of perspectives and components to German social pedagogies that could inform my definition for use; from Hans Thiersch's Life world orientation, which focuses on clients' (social work) subjective views and everyday life routines (Grunwald & Thiersch, 2009), to Hans-Uwe Otto's theories on German Social work and social pedagogy, as a reflexive profession between social workers and clients (Otto & Schaarschuch, 1999); there are several possible theoretical influences for a definition of social pedagogy (Sandermann & Neumann, 2018). Within my study I focus on upbringing, as a feature of social pedagogy, and draw on German social pedagogue Klaus Mollenhauer's work *Forgotten Connections* and his writing on pedagogical relationships (Hopmann, 2014). *Forgotten Connections* offers the theory on upbringing and is reviewed in 3.2.3 below.

Defined as an educational response to social problems associated with industrialisation and urbanisation (Mollenhauer, 2014), social pedagogy is characterised as a reflexive relationship between theory and practice in social care, in which both are developed by the other (Eichsteller & Holthoff, 2011). Social pedagogy is underpinned by reformist and egalitarian positions, which promote social emancipation for the poor by aiming to create a more just society through the holistic development of individuals

and groups; it aspires to this by preventing and alleviating social problems through educational measures (Hämäläinen, 2003). Social pedagogy is ultimately concerned with growth, learning and well-being (Kornbeck & Rosendal Jensen, 2009). Specifically, social pedagogy provides a theoretical and practical approach for the raising of children through loving, caring, inter-generational, pedagogical relationships (Smith, 2013).

Looking specifically towards social pedagogy in a Scottish context, Smith points out that there may be some resonance between social pedagogy and Scottish traditions of welfare and education (Smith, 2012). Indeed, the foundations of Scottish social work were laid within the Kilbrandon Report of 1964, discussed in Chapter 2, although the Kilbrandon committee recommended the development of a social education department, rather than distinct education and social work disciplines (Smith & Monteux, 2019). It is against this backdrop of broadly socio-educational foundations that there might be argued to be a more natural 'fit' for social pedagogy in Scotland than perhaps the other three nations within the UK, 'The Kilbrandon Report's proposed creation of a social education department is reminiscent of the principles of social pedagogy' (Asquith, Clark, & Waterhouse, 2005 p3). It might also be argued that the broad concept of upbringing alluded to in the Kilbrandon Report have found their way into subsequent Scottish policy developments and in particular, the GIRFEC framework (Smith, 2013). Against this, Smith and Whyte argue that Scottish social work practice has, since Kilbrandon, followed more Anglo-American traditions, 'where social problems and human right are over individualised' (Smith & Whyte, 2008 p26). They argue that Scotland might, more appropriately, draw on models of social education and European notions of social pedagogy to address social issues from an educational perspective (2008). Indeed, Smith and Whyte go on to further argue that rather than the deficit focus of much contemporary social work, Scotland could adopt solutions located within concepts of education in its broadest sense and upbringing (2008). However, Smith and Monteux offer a word of caution in an adoption of social pedagogy within the current social work practice and culture, as 'it would need a re-framing of social work away from its current technical rationality, which looks to largely unsubstantiated claims of 'evidence-based practice' within increasingly managerial cultures, towards a value rationality' (2019, p13); moving

towards a developed understanding of individuals, society and the ways in which they interact. This shift would require a rethinking of social work to move beyond risk averse practice and towards supporting workers and those working with care experienced young people, through reflection, relationships, dialogue and values (Smith & Monteux, 2019). Before moving on to discuss pedagogical relationships, and the process of raising children, known as upbringing (Mollenhauer, 2014), I first provide an overview of *the common third* as discussed in social pedagogy literature.

3.2.2 The Common Third

The Common Third, defined in social pedagogy as a shared activity that both adult and young person have equal interest and co-productive investment in (Cameron *et al.*, 2016; Petrie & Chambers, 2009; Smith, 2012). Predominantly reported in the literature as an activity shared between practitioner (Social Worker) and client (Young Person), it can be used to explore the development of intergenerational relationships, including foster carer and foster child (Thempra, 2019). The concept of the Common Third is essentially the co-invested relational aspect of any activity ranging from day to day cooking or walking the dog; up to larger activities like attending national sports events or even a family holiday (Petrie & Chambers, 2009). The important aspect of the common third is a requirement for authenticity and reflection. Both adult and young person are engaged in learning together by experience, and in essence this can be any activity that allows both parties to agree for the value of that experience (Thempra, 2019).

3.2.3 Social Pedagogy: Theories on Upbringing and Bildung

In this section I show how the understanding of upbringing as education in its broadest sense and '*Bildung*' as character forming and self-realisation, form central elements of Mollenhauer's work on human cultures (Mollenhauer, 2014). In order to establish a line of argument that allows me to develop the role of upbringing, within a fostering context, I must first posit two aspects on the role of a foster carer, developed by researchers exploring upbringing in foster care (Cameron *et al.*, 2016). Firstly, as discussed in more detail in section 3.4, foster carers can be thought of, in a pedagogical sense, as experts in the everyday (Cameron *et al.*, 2016). A focus on everyday

orientation by foster carers for the children they raise, can be considered as part of a lifeworld orientation (Grunwald & Thiersch, 2009), which is a facet of social pedagogy that acknowledges the importance of an individual's everyday reality and focuses on direct experiences, living contexts and life skill development (Eichsteller & Holthoff, 2011). Beyond formal structured systems, such as education, health and social work, foster carers can positively influence life chances for foster children through education in everyday life at home (Cameron *et al.*, 2016). Foster carers can also help young people navigate the spaces between these systems in their role as advocate (Cameron, 2004). Secondly, in order to deliver this expertise in everyday life, it is necessary to consider a foster carer as an upbringer on behalf of society (Cameron *et al.*, 2016; Mollenhauer, 2014). In doing so, to expand the understanding of 'in *loco parentis'* to include the way or methods of raising children, who are under the care of the state, and what aspects of parenting, if any, are present for those working with these young people (Piper & Sikes, 2010). According to Mollenhauer, upbringing is in all aspects of human culture, from values and traditions to language (Cameron *et al.*, 2016; Mollenhauer, 2014). Studies that contribute findings on child development, families and relationships can often use upbringing as a term to capture all aspects of raising a child, without clarification on how this is done. For example, Norwegian researchers undertook a study exploring how parents include other people's children in the upbringing of their own (Bendixsen & Danielsen, 2019). This study draws on terms such as an egalitarian society, beliefs and wellbeing, yet does so with no reference to social pedagogy (Bendixsen & Danielsen, 2019). Upbringing is, more often than not, used to describe the period of time and parental relationship whilst growing up (Brook, Richter, & Whiteman, 2000). However, within this study, upbringing is defined through a specific social pedagogy lens.

Klaus Mollenhauer (1928-1998) was the son of a prison teacher and a social worker in Berlin (Friesen, 2016). He is renowned for his work on social work education and critical pedagogy (*Sozialpädagogik*) and studied history, sociology, psychology, literature and pedagogy at Hamburg and Göttingen (Friesen & Sævi, 2010). His first two publications *Education and Emancipation: Pedagogical Sketches* (1968) and *Theories of Educational Processes: Towards an introduction to educational problems* (1972), were both deeply influenced by critical social theory developed by the

Frankfurt school (Friesen & Sævi, 2010). Social critical theory is an interpretation of Marxist philosophy by five Frankfurt theoreticians; Erich Fromm, Walter Benjamin, Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno and Herbert Marcuse, and maintains that ideology is the principle obstacle to the possibilities of human liberation (Brenner, 2009). *Forgotten Connections* marks a decisive break by Mollenhauer on concerns for education, as shaped by overarching social and political ideologies, such as class and state, and moves on to explore dimensions of education such as the child's experiences and the broader experiential factors of education and upbringing (Friesen & Sævi, 2010).

Forgotten Connections: *On Culture and Upbringing* (*Vergessene Zusammenhänge: über Kultur und Erziehung*) was published in 1983 and has been translated in to multiple languages (Friesen, 2016). However, it was only recently translated in to English in 2014 by Norm Friesen (Mollenhauer, 2014). The central theme of the book, and indeed much of Mollenhauer's work, is based around a question posed by Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834), a key influence on Mollenhauer, 'What does the older generation actually want with the younger?' (Friesen, 2016 p3). To address this question, *Forgotten Connections* deals with six further themes and questions.

1. Why do we want (to be with) children?
2. What ways of life do we present to children?
3. What way of life should we systematically represent to children?
4. How can we draw out and respect a child's inerrant character?
5. How can we give children space to be active and to solve their own problems?
6. Who am I? How can I help others with their identity problems?

Each of these questions is addressed in a chapter within the book (Mollenhauer, 2014). While it is beyond the capacity of this review to look in depth at each of these chapters, I will clarify and further explain key terms and concepts that emerge from the book which are essential elements in my analysis and findings within this thesis. Firstly, Mollenhauer's use of the term 'culture' does not signify historical or national traditions, it is used in its broadest sense to encapsulate our everyday lives, language and values (Friesen & Sævi, 2010). The second term that requires some clarification is 'upbringing'. In response to the dominance and perhaps reliance on attachment

theory (Bowlby *et al.*, 1992), as a 'master theory' that shapes our understanding on human relationships, and especially in a care setting (Smith *et al.*, 2017); academic discourse has begun to identify upbringing as an alternative perspective on the inter-generational relationships 'at the heart of bringing up children' (Cameron *et al.*, 2016 p167). In the English translation of *Forgotten Connections*, the first chapter is entitled 'What are we talking about when we talk of upbringing' (Mollenhauer, 2014 p1). This chapter starts with the question, influenced by Schleiermacher and mentioned earlier 'why do we want to be with children?'. However, Mollenhauer suggests that, whilst there is no simple answer to this question, his theories on connections, culture and upbringing require a 'passing on' of what we hold to be good in our lives (Friesen & Sævi, 2010). Passing on, also needs to be understood within a context that suggests the way of life we (adults) offer to children has some common value (Mollenhauer, 2014). In its purest sense, 'upbringing', 'passing on', 'drawing out or up' by adult to child, is not about the efficient instruction of a child in a set of skills that prepares them for future life and employment; it is not about matching children with predefined social or economic roles (Friesen & Sævi, 2010). Upbringing is a process in which the adults [in general] act as midwives to a child's development by helping them to negotiate their personalities (Friesen, 2016). This negotiation of the self, is bound up in perhaps one of the most complicated aspects in the book and the development of *Bildung* (Mollenhauer, 2014). *Bildungstheorie* has no direct translation in to English (Hopmann, 2014), however, it has been described by those working in social pedagogy, as formation, cultivation or specifically, what is happening in education, self-education and upbringing; Mollenhauer has chosen to encapsulate it as 'the way of the self' (Saevi, 2014). In this way, *Bildung* is closely related to 'socialisation', yet is more complex, as it encapsulates the process of meaning making as an 'active sense of personal agency and mutual co-construction of knowledge' (Cameron *et al.*, 2016, p164). Central to this notion, is the *upbringer* as a co-traveller on the learning journey (Dahlberg, 2012). *Bildung* is the interconnected relationship and engagement of self and world, self and others and self with itself and its growth (Friesen, 2016). Petrie offers a concise explanation:

> German *Bildung*, part of Germany's rich vocabulary, relates to the education of the human being as a member of society … *Bildung* represents the development

> of human beings (i) as full members of society aware of, and acting on, their responsibilities towards themselves and others, together with (ii) the continuing personal transformation of each person in interaction with others and with cultural life. (Petrie, 2013 p5)

The central aim of this thesis is to contribute empirical knowledge to understanding on how the young men in care navigate cultures in both birth and foster families whilst in care, and to what extent a single male foster father influences the values and beliefs of these young men whilst in care and in some cases, now as fathers themselves. *Bildung*, as a process self-education during their time with me, perhaps even more so than *Erziehung*, which can be associated with younger children, formed part of the boys' stories.

Before moving on to provide an overview of the studies on upbringing. It is important to offer some acknowledgement on potential limitations of Mollenhauer's work and on upbringing (Mollenhauer, 2014). Since Mollenhauer wrote *Forgotten Connections* in the early 1980s, academic work in the sociology of childhood has moved on to a children's rights agenda and the conceptualisation of children as experts in their own lives. The concept of adults as 'co-travellers' is discussed through the work of Dahlberg (2012) above. However, whilst acknowledging possible tensions around Mollenhauer's writing and current discourses around the sociology of childhood, I have come to understand that Mollenhauer accommodates this tension through his development of *Bildung,* and children having values and beliefs, which are learned within habits of everyday life, and are drawn up or out in the process of upbringing. Indeed, Mollenhauer addresses the idea of young people as active participants within his discussion on values and beliefs that are learned within the habits of everyday life; a central tenet of this thesis discussed in Chapter 7. I now move on to review the literature on upbringing, as developed within Social Pedagogy.

3.2.4 Studies on Upbringing

Interest to date on *Upbringing*, within a social pedagogy perspective, is predominantly located in theoretical work on raising children in residential care. Literature reviewed in this section was identified using the criteria given in 3.1 and the following additional criteria:

- Publications that draw on Klaus Mollenhauer's developed use of upbringing.
- Literature from authors focusing on a UK context, understanding or interpretation of social pedagogy, and then specifically a Scottish context.
- Publications that explore the implementation of social pedagogy in a UK care context, in any or all of the care settings (residential, kinship or foster care).

Searches using these criteria identified a relatively small amount of sources. *Upbringing* begins to emerge in research discourse at the start of this century and predominantly in studies that either explore its use in residential care across central Europe, and/or how this may influence residential practice in the UK. For example, Cameron's ethnographic exploration of social pedagogy in Germany, France, Denmark, Belgium and the Netherlands is a good, early example of a UK analysis of European care systems that have embraced social pedagogy in their care practices (Cameron, 2004). Interviewing key informants, including policy makers at national and regional levels, school heads and residential staff; and where possible, running focus groups with residents from the homes, Cameron's study produced findings from two countries, Germany and Denmark, and argued that this pedagogic approach could offer a unified and coherent approach to residential work in the UK (Cameron, 2004). Cameron's work highlights a tension present in any analysis of social pedagogic practice across central Europe, and to some extent addresses Kornbeck's question on Social Pedagogy being too German for a UK context? (Kornbeck, 2013). There are risks in simply mapping or attempting to transplant social pedagogy from a Germany national context to one in the UK welfare context. Cameron takes the view that social pedagogy can help us theorize the 'everyday' aspects of living together, and helps move a care agenda located in protection and supervision, on to one of education in its broadest sense (Cameron, 2004).

Kyriacou *et al.* explore similar mappings of social pedagogy from Norway to England (Kyriacou, Ellingsen, Stephens, & Sundaram, 2009), in which the researchers compared Norwegian and English approaches to social pedagogy. This study takes an overview of both policy and practice in both countries and arrives at three questions. The first question echoes the findings in Cameron's study above and a requirement that any country must reach an understanding of the component elements of social

pedagogy, in order to include it in their practice. The second question is the extent to which social pedagogy's components can be enacted by different professionals, including teachers and care workers (and I would include foster carers). The final question addresses the need for change in education provision for professionals working with *all* children, not just those in care, and suggest there may be a distinction between those that may need informed about social pedagogy components and those that may take on a social pedagogue role (Kyriacou *et al.*, 2009).

To what extent and in what ways can social pedagogy move to a UK context, is also the question addressed by Petrie and Cameron in a section of an edited volume, *The diversity of social pedagogy in Europe,* (Kornbeck & Jensen, 2009). In their chapter, Petrie and Cameron address Kornbeck's question first raised in 2002, on the possibilities of social pedagogy's influence moving to the UK, and explore this from the other side, and focus on the possibility presented by importing social pedagogy to the UK (Petrie & Cameron, 2009). They conclude that the importation of social pedagogy, at the time of writing, was 'work in progress', developing within specific social and national contexts (Petrie & Cameron, 2009). Before moving on to examine the Scottish context, there is one further relevant study on upbringing across Europe, that I wish to review, as it focuses on foster care, and offers a more detailed analysis on upbringing, within a UK context. Cameron, Reimer and Smith's study, Towards a theory of upbringing in foster care in Europe (Cameron *et al.*, 2016).

Representatives from 12 countries across Europe, attended a meeting hosted by the Centre for Understanding Social Pedagogy (CUSP) in May 2012 (Cameron *et al.*, 2016). Attendees were research experts in social pedagogy or were invited as experts in foster care. Prior to attending the meeting, the researchers and country experts were asked to provide an overview of foster care, as a provision compared to other forms of care in their country, and the current state of research in this field. They were also asked to define upbringing, both generally and in the specific context of care, and then specifically foster care (Cameron *et al.*, 2016). The findings reported in this study provide some context to my comparisons between the German philosophical foundations of a social pedagogy and the Scottish context in which this thesis is located. A full analysis and report of the findings for each country is provided in

(Appendix A). Here, I provide a summary of the findings for the German and Scottish reports, as part of the line from social pedagogy's origins to its influence on social work theory and practice in Scottish foster care.

The Scottish perspective on Mollenhauer's work on upbringing emerges in the work of Smith (2013) and is discussed in more detail below. The remit of foster care in both Germany and Scotland can be short or long term, with a strong commitment to a family-style placement. In Germany, long term foster care can become a 'quasi-adoption', and in Scotland, which has moved away from a long-standing tradition of residential care and towards foster care, is moving towards permanence as a preferred option and could also be considered quasi-adoption, where there is no plan for a young person to return to birth family and the local authority and or carer takes on more of the parental rights for the young person (Cameron *et al.*, 2016; Woods & Henderson, 2018). In Germany, *Upbringing* is defined in the report as ensconced in the concepts of *Bildung* and *Erziehung* and refers to the co-productive, interactive, adult and child relationships present in family and foster family settings. In Scotland, *Upbringing*, as a process of meeting the needs of children in 'trouble' and should be supported through forms of social education, emerged in the Kilbrandon Report, discussed in Chapter 2 (Committee, 1964). Looking more specifically at an understanding of *Upbringing* in foster care in both countries, Germany developed an understanding that the foster carer provides the resources needed, including material and emotional, for a young person in care to navigate social milieu of life in care. In Scotland, there is a broad understanding of the state's role with children in care, and this is threaded through policy from the 1964 Social Work (Scotland) Act, to the current framework, Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC). Both GIRFEC and Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) set out a vision for the holistic development of all of Scotland's children, not just those in care, based around wellbeing and focusing on the whole person and their social setting.

The above findings in Cameron *et al*'s study highlights two key aspects. Given social pedagogy's origins in Germany and the location of my study in Scotland, it was interesting to note that researchers in both countries shared an understanding of upbringing as implicit in both care and educational contexts; with the exception of

Switzerland, the remaining countries saw upbringing as a process in care alone, or more predominantly education alone (Cameron *et al.*, 2016). Perhaps one of the most insightful aspects to come from this study, is the concept of foster carers as 'experts in everyday life', as it informs a framework developed around *Erziehung* and *Bildung*, used in my discussion of everyday life in Chapter 7. On balance, 'the main message to emerge is that the concept of upbringing is underdeveloped in both research and policy in relation to foster care' (Cameron *et al.*, 2016 p163). An earlier study by Smith, *Forgotten Connections: Reviving the concept of upbringing in Scottish child welfare*, is discussed in more depth in the following section, as it moves the discussion towards my area of focus, and a Scottish context (Smith, 2013). Smith's study also addresses the Scottish local and cultural traditions discussed in Petrie and Cameron's study in the previous paragraph (Petrie & Cameron, 2009).

This section of the literature review has provided a review of the limited theoretical literature in a UK context on Upbringing. The review has given a definition and context for *Upbringing*, as defined in social pedagogy for its use in this thesis. This review provided an overview of the main themes and influences in the wider literature. These include: comparisons and analysis of mainland European use of social pedagogy and any possible integration in social care setting within the UK; issues around cultural contexts and their influence or barriers on policy development, and ultimately practice; and perhaps most importantly, the genuine aim by some of those working in the UK care sector to establish an approach that identifies and meets the needs of children growing up in care, through the adoption of social pedagogy. Many of the studies reviewed, were theoretically driven and seldom addressed the views or voices of those in care. I now move on to address Petrie and Cameron's observation on a Scottish context (Petrie & Cameron, 2009), and a review of the literature around upbringing in Scotland.

3.2.5 Studies on an Upbringing in Scotland

Whilst not explicitly drawing on Mollenhauer's development of *Upbringing*, but providing some focus on a Scottish context, Smith and Whyte's study on *Social Education and Social Pedagogy: Reclaiming a Scottish tradition in social work*, locates the Scottish foundations of *Upbringing* within the Kilbrandon legacy (Smith

& Whyte, 2008). The Kilbrandon report recommended the importance of not differentiating the needs of children who offend and those who were offended against. Smith and Whyte sum up this view, as an acknowledgement of 'needs before deeds' (Smith & Whyte, 2008). The Kilbrandon committee argued that children whose needs were not being met, or who had committed a crime, had a failure in their upbringing and this could be best met through education, and perhaps more interestingly, 'social education' or social pedagogy. This involved working with parents, and those caring for children, in partnership to 'strengthen those natural influences for good' (Smith & Whyte, 2008 p21). The Kilbrandon committee recommended an integrated social welfare system, within the department of education. It could be argued this recommendation laid the foundations for what we now know as GIRFEC, and an integrated approach to supporting Scotland's children. However, this aspect of the Kilbrandon report was rejected in favour of distinct social work and to sit alongside the already distinct education system As stated at the start of this section, whilst not drawing on what we now know as Mollenhauer's concept of *Upbringing*, Smith and Whyte's 2008 paper threads together elements; the needs of children, the role of society and parents in raising children and more specifically, a concept of social education, as the foundations of social pedagogy and *Upbringing*, as used within this thesis. In the time between this paper in 2008 and the translation of Mollenhauer's work in 2014, Smith discusses on the role of *Upbringing* in care in his 2012 paper, Social Pedagogy from a Scottish Perspective (Smith, 2012).

In this paper, Smith teases out the differences in the training, qualification and role of social pedagogues in Europe and the UK, the various contexts in which social pedagogy may be practised, and suggesting social pedagogues in Scotland could be the 'conceptual glue' to help various professions, such as teachers, youth workers, criminal justice and disability services, work together more effectively (Smith, 2012 p48). Working from available online translations of *Forgotten Connections*, Smith develops the idea of *Upbringing* through community responsibility for children and the concept of social pedagogues as upbringers on behalf of society (Smith, 2013). The idea of foster carers as social pedagogues emerges in Cameron, Reimer and Smith's (2016) paper and moves on to posit the concept of foster carers as upbringers, which is central to this study.

I had planned to review the literature, both theoretical and empirical, on *Upbringing* in Scottish foster care. However, beyond the comparisons made between German and Scottish foster care systems in Cameron *et al*'s 2016 study discussed above, there are no studies looking at how the social pedagogy theories and constructs on raising children are understood or reported for children growing up in foster care in Scotland. Reimer, who has worked with Smith on research exploring upbringing has developed a body of work on foster care from the cultural challenges facing young people joining a new foster family (Reimer, 2010), discussed in detail in section (9.4) around positive care stories, to joining the current challenges to the dominance of attachment theory in foster care (Reimer, Schäfer, Pierlings, & Wolf, 2016). However, there remains a dearth of studies exploring the experiences of young people in foster care and how they make sense of their lived experiences whilst in care. I now move on to review the literature around families and foster families, in order to locate the boys' account of their *Upbringing* with me, it is important to understand the various cultures, language and roles the shape their constructs of family life.

3.3 Family and Foster Family Life

I have divided this section of the literature review into three sub-sections. To begin (3.3.1) I provide a synthesis of the existing empirical literature seeking and exploring first person accounts from children growing up in care. This small body of literature is reported in three sub-sections; views on maintaining contact and relationships with birth family (3.3.1.1), views on education, mental health and outcomes after foster care (3.3.1.2) and finally, a review of Goodyer (2016) exploring the views of young people moving in to foster care (3.3.1.3). I have started with this to establish a context for what follows in my discussion on family life in section (3.3.2), which begins with a review of the literature and analysis of the importance of a 'language of family', in order to understand how the language is used by and around foster children, and can help to make sense of the emotional and symbolic significance of their constructs of their everyday experiences in life section (3.3.2.1). Given the specific focus on a single male foster father in the research question, I then move on to review the literature around family membership, men in the family, and specifically foster fathers, and what part 'role models' can play in the lives of foster children in section (3.3.2.2). I close

this section of the review, with a discussion on the literature that sets up a context for gender, masculinities and caring, within this thesis (3.3.3.) Whilst it is not the aim of this thesis to explore gender specifically, the research question frames aspects of gender, masculinities and caring within my role as a single male carer. I have provided an overview of studies that help shape the gap in our knowledge within these topics and foster care.

3.3.1 Empirical studies exploring foster children's views on life in care

In this section, I provide an overview and analysis of the literature seeking the views of children growing up in care. There is a significant body of research about children in care but much less that involves the first-person accounts of those in care. I have reviewed literature on family-based care, both kinship and foster care, rather than residential care, as comparisons with a family styled unit are more relevant to this thesis. My initial search suggested there is a larger body of literature on the views of children currently in kinship care rather than foster care (Aldgate, 2009; Balsells, Pastor, Mateos, Vaquero, & Urrea, 2015; Quest, Fullerton, Geenen, & Powers, 2012). The volume of studies around kinship care may be in line with its increasing emergence as a significant form of placement for children in care in Scotland (Hill, Gilligan, & Connelly, 2019). Children in kinship care see living with a family member as less stigmatising than foster care (Farmer, Selwyn, & Meakings, 2013), which may allow researchers to navigate first person accounts and experiences of those in kinship care more easily. While I focus on the literature seeking the views of foster children on life in care, because it is so limited, I have also included studies with young people in kinship care. This small body of literature breaks down into three categories; research looking at maintaining contact and relationships with birth family whilst in foster care (Baker, Creegan, Quinones, & Rozelle, 2016; Thomas *et al.*, 2017), studies exploring educational attainment, mental health and life after foster care (Cunningham & Diversi, 2012; McClung & Gayle, 2010; McCoy, Mcmillen, & Spitznagel, 2008; Minnis, Everett, Pelosi, Dunn, & Knapp, 2006; Quest *et al.*, 2012; Randle, 2013), and one specific study exploring the views of children who have moved in to a foster family (Goodyer, 2016). I begin with the first of these categories and research on contact and relationships with birth families.

3.3.1.1 Views on maintaining contact and relationships with birth family

Baker *et al.*, carried out a comprehensive literature review, as part of a study exploring the views of children in foster care and their relationship with birth parents (Baker *et al.*, 2016). It is important to state that 'foster care' refers to both kinship fostering and 'regular fostering', in this study written in the USA (Baker *et al.*, 2016). They reviewed 27 studies according to criteria that included (i) published in the English language (ii) sample included children currently in foster care (iii) methodology was qualitative and included interviews with children in kinship and regular foster placements (Baker *et al.*, 2016). Before moving on to discuss the individual studies reviewed and then a focus on the UK contributions that are of interest to this thesis; it is interesting to note that Baker *et al's* study drew heavily on attachment theory, in order to discuss relationships between foster children and birth parents in the studies they reviewed (2016). Each of the 27 studies were read by all three authors and coded four themes; existing attachments to caregivers they had been removed from, separation anxiety, distorted cognitions in order to maintain attachment to an abusive caregiver and minimise potential harm to this caregiver, and finally, were there any feelings of gratitude at being removed form an abusive caregiver (Baker *et al.*, 2016). Baker *et al's* analysis of the 27 studies showed a significant percentage of the children reported in these studies met these criteria, ranging between 83% on separation anxiety and 100% for expressing an existing attachment (2016).

Of the 27 papers in Baker *et al*'s (2016) review, 11 reported research from the United Kingdom including two from Scotland, both of which focus on kinship care (Aldgate & McIntosh, 2006; Burgess, Rossvoll, Wallace, & Daniel, 2010). Aldgate's study was commissioned by the Social Work Services Inspectorate, as part of a wider body of research reported in *Extraordinary Lives*, which reviewed best practice, policies and government reports on looked after and accommodated children in Scotland, in order to identify what 'good care' entailed (Social Work Inspection Agency, 2006). Aldgate *et al.*'s study, was one of three contributing to the *Extraordinary Lives* report (Social Work Inspection Agency, 2006). The second Scottish study (Burgess, Rossvoll, Wallace, & Daniel, 2010), aimed to develop understanding of children's experiences of living with kinship carers through topics that were important to them. This research

used qualitative methods developed by Children 1st (www.children1st.org.uk) and researchers from the University of Stirling. Semi-structured interviews were used to discuss topics grouped around 'current and past living settings', 'contact with birth family', 'broader networks' and 'belonging' (Burgess *et al.*, 2010). Twelve young people aged 11 to 17 years were interviewed and findings were reported under themes including: caregiving relationships, transition to kinship carers, adapting to life in kinship care, stigma, identity and belonging (Burgess *et al.*, 2010). The study concluded that the participants felt supported and normal, had a strong sense of belonging in their kinship families, and overall, did not wish to return to their birth parents (Burgess *et al.* 2010). The authors concluded that kinship care was preferable to foster care. They also suggest that based on the young people's views, a low rate of rehabilitation (defined as return to birth parents) should not be interpreted as an indicator of poorer outcomes (Burgess *et al.*, 2010). The participants also felt integrated in their communities, they were living with people that understood their history and living context, and all reported career aspirations and plans. Burgess *et al.* highlight this, noting 'this cannot be under- estimated and differs from the experience of many young people in residential or foster care.' (2010, p305).

Since Baker *et al.*'s 2016 review, one further relevant study has been published exploring the narratives of former foster children, now adults, using relational dialectics theory (Thomas *et al.*, 2017). This research was conducted in the US, and focused on 'Permanence' as a belief that family is formed through biogenetic connections, whereas 'Performance' suggests 'doing family' creates family through tolerance, unconditional love and an ability to transform one another (Thomas *et al.*, 2017). The study reported that former foster children understood their lives as complex webs or interactions between permanence and performance, and that people not biologically linked to them, could create a hybrid understanding of family (Thomas *et al.*, 2017), and I return to this topic in section 8.3:

> Permanence and Performance intertwine and separate to create nuanced understandings of family … recognising blood relations as family but at the same time [participants] put forth that others who were not biological relatives to the family of origin, were also part of their family … and discursively negate, counter, and occasionally entertain the dominant Permanence discourse through talk that (also) invoked Performance. (Thomas *et al.*, 2017 p249).

The fluid nature of the navigation of 'Permanence' and 'Performance' by participants in my study is discussed in Chapter 5 'Family Constructs'.

The data from this study has also offered a new dimension to views on maintaining contact with birth family, and the role of grandparents. In section 5.3.2 I report the data that relates to the boy's grandparents and birth siblings and in section 8.3.2.2 I discuss grandparents as value transmitters (Noriega, López, Domínguez, & Velasco, 2017), and as upbringers in the lives of their grandchildren. To provide some context to this area, I searched for literature on the role of grandparents within the lives of children in foster care and found an additional gap in research. There appears to be a lack of studies exploring the role that grandparents play in the lives of their grandchildren, whilst they are in foster care. Particularly, from the viewpoint of the young people in care themselves. There is an extensive and growing body of work on the role of grandparents as kinship carers; exploring a range of topics from substitute parenting (Dunning, 2006; Hunt, 2018) to the stresses involved in financial support, children's behaviours and working with social work systems (Lee, Clarkson-Hendrix, & Lee, 2016) and studies looking at the role of grandparents as kinship carers compared to a foster-care provision (Harnett, Dawe, & Russell, 2014). Boyle (2017) looked at the impact of contact, or loss of contact, for children in long-term foster care and concluded that even in adoption and long-term-fostering, there positive impacts on outcomes when contact was maintained with grandparents. The findings and discussion from this thesis add to our knowledge by positing the important role that grandparents play in the transmission and upholding of values for their grandchildren. Also, this thesis develops an understanding of the role of foster grandparents in an extended family role and new traditions. I now move on to the second of the categories, looking at literature on the views of foster children on education, mental health and outcomes or life beyond foster care.

3.3.1.2 Views on education, mental health, and outcomes

Many studies that are relevant to this topic were conducted outside the UK. Four were based in the USA (Cunningham & Diversi, 2012; L. Jones, 2011; McCoy *et al.*, 2008; Quest *et al.*, 2012), all of which studied transitions or 'ageing out' from foster care to

adult life. One study from Australia explored the views of former foster children on what constituted a successful foster placement (Randle, 2013). And I review these first before turning to the two studies from Scotland (Minnis *et al.*, 2006 and McClung *et al.*, 2010).

Cunningham and Diversi (2012) explored the views of young people 'ageing out' of foster care in the USA and gave an important account of the importance of trust-based relationships for generating data for qualitative studies. They highlight a lack of first person accounts by those in foster care, and a dominance of studies drawing on 'hit and run focus groups, interviews conducted by research assistants unknown to the young people and indirect assessments of youths' emotional states' (Cunningham & Diversi, 2012 p587). Cunningham and Diversi took a critical ethnographic approach to create a narrative space for young people aging out of foster care to talk about their experiences in care (2012). The study concluded that economic challenges, housing and a loss of social support were the common themes running across the accounts given (Cunningham & Diversi, 2012), themes which are reflected in studies carried out in the UK (Chapman, Wall, & Barth, 2004; Chavaudra, Moore, Marriott, & Jakhara, 2014; Harker *et al.*, 2003). Also exploring transitions from foster care on to independent living in the USA, McCoy *et al.* interviewed 404 young people aged 17-19 in foster care in Missouri, with each young person being interviewed up to nine times (McCoy *et al.*, 2008). This research sought to investigate five questions, three of which were answered by quantitative data: Who left care pre 19?, When they left? and Where did they go? (McCoy *et al.*, 2008). Two other research questions were addressed through individual interviews: What were the circumstances of their exits from foster care? And did they want to leave care, and if so why? The scale of the study and frequency of interaction with participants are unusual. Young people were interviewed in person at aged 17 and by telephone interview every three months until aged 19. The research team lost contact with 20% of the sample by the last interview but retained 325 of the original participants at age 19 (McCoy *et al.*, 2008). The authors argue for a move from 18 to 21 for the compulsory age for leaving foster care in the USA, improved housing provision for those transitioning out of foster care, but most importantly, the views of young people stressed 'staying in care should be made tolerable for older youth' (McCoy *et al.*, 2008 p743). In contrast, Quest *et al.* (2012)

reports a smaller-scale study involving seven foster children aged 15 to 18, who were in special education (Quest *et al.*, 2012). In addition to interviews with each participant, the researchers also encouraged them to take photographs and keep journals depicting their lives (Quest *et al.*, 2012). The aim of Quest *et al.*'s longitudinal study, was to examine the detailed experiences, aims and goals of the young people, as they navigated change in their life circumstances and a transition to adulthood (Quest *et al.*, 2012). Their findings suggest that those receiving special educational support, whilst in foster care faced significantly poorer educational outcomes than foster children in mainstream education. The study also highlights the importance of an adult as mentor and ally, and in particular the support of caring and committed foster carer was reported as instrumental in helping the young people with their educational challenges, and as they transitioned to adulthood (Quest *et al.*, 2012). A similar study is Jones (2011), a three-year longitudinal study of sixteen foster care youths emerging into adulthood in the USA. Jones (2011) developed an analytic framework using the concepts of *connectedness* and *risk,* to explore the young people's adaption to adult life. *Connectedness* referred to the young person's ability to interact with the adult world through relationships, education and employment; and *risk* referred to mental health, substance abuse and financial issues that could hinder engagement with the adult world (Jones, 2011). The sixteen youths in Jones' study were interviewed at six-monthly interviews for a three year period after leaving foster care, using graduate level researchers (Jones, 2011). Findings reported a salient theme around resilience, despite adverse *risks* in their lives, the youths participating in the study had maintained at least one 'productive connection in the adult world' (Jones, 2011 p1927). This level of *connectedness* was important to the youths in the period of transition, as it facilitated improved engagement with systems, such as education and social work (Jones, 2011). Aspects of connectedness are family models, both existing and a requirement for a broader understanding are discussed in Chapter 8.

Finally, Randle (2013) conducted research in Australia, exploring the views of former foster children, now adults, of a successful foster placement. Eleven participants, aged 18–28, took part in in-depth interviews with researchers. During the study process and in discussion with the participants, the researchers categorised a successful foster experience as 'feeling happy, wanted, loved listened to and safe' (Randle, 2013 p16).

Randle acknowledged that 'outcomes' are still regarded as an important measure in success, but argued that perhaps more important were having fun-loving, genuine foster carers, who listened to the children's views and spent time enjoying activities with the foster children, and were 'not being too focused on the more serious aspects of life such as work' (Randle, 2013 p17), were significantly important to the young people in Randle's study.

Before examining Minnis *et al's* (2006) and McClung and Gayle's (2010) work in a Scottish context, two studies from the wider UK (Holland, 2010) and (Mannay *et al.*, 2017), are first reviewed. Holland's research question 'How do children and young people who are looked after understand, negotiate and wish to express their everyday lives and identities' drew on qualitative data from young people across kinship, foster and residential care (Holland, 2010). From an initial target of twenty participants, data were collected from eight using a range of methods, including informal interviews, film, photography, animation, diary keeping and drawing. Two key themes from Holland's (2010) work are central to my study. The first relates to the character and importance of relationships, 'It was seen in this paper that young people valued empathy, evidence of care through everyday acts, and longevity of relationships with both foster- carers and social workers' (Holland, 2010 p1677). Both the relational and everyday acts mentioned here are central to my study and are where the contribution to knowledge of this thesis is broadly located. Secondly, Holland's work highlights a tension around the age children leave care and a legislative position that 'still anticipates a much earlier 'independence' than that experienced by the majority of the population' (Holland, 2009 p1677). The ongoing relationship with my foster sons, after their placements have ended is also an aspect on upbringing in foster care that this thesis addresses and is discussed in sections (5.2) the boys' perceptions of me as their father and (7.4.2) moving on to independent living.

Mannay et al's (2017) study, carried out in Wales, looked at educational experiences and attainment for looked after children and young people (LACYP). This is an important study as it takes a different perspective on the topic. Whereas studies on education and outcomes for care experienced pupils have tended to highlight the poorer attainment and outcomes for these young people. Mannay *et al.*, while

acknowledging the broader dominant discourse, argue for an understanding that avoids a deficit approach and allows for educational aspirations for care experienced young people located in achievement (Mannay *et al.*, 2017). The researchers draw on the concept of 'supported' subject position for care experienced pupils, who are often excluded from discourses of success, as education systems minimise academic pressure and expectations, to accommodate a perceived chaotic and challenging life out with school (2017). Subject positions are defined as 'how the assignment of the 'looked after' subject position, through enactment of school policies and practices, can confer unintended consequences and exacerbate educational disadvantage' (p685). Mannay *et al's* study focuses on 'the commonplace, ordinary and routine aspects of school life centralised the ways in which subject positions are made and remade, and their educational impacts' (p685). This resonates with my discussion and findings on the need to develop capacity for a positive narrative on care experiences. I draw this together in my discussion in section (9.4.2) on language and meaning for care experienced young people.

There are two studies which explored the views of Scottish foster children on mental health and education. Minnis *et al.*, (2006) took a mixed methods approach to gather information on mental health problems and engagement with systems such as CAMHs, for foster children and their foster families, and followed this up with interviews with 182 foster children across 17 local authorities in Scotland. McClung and Gayle (2010) also took a mixed methods approach to study what aspects of the care factors, such as placement type, reasons for coming in to care and age on coming in to care, influenced educational achievement for children looked after at home and looked after away from home.

Minnis *et al.* used a Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) and Reactive Attachment Disorder (RAD) questionnaire sent to 182 foster children, aged between 5 and 16 across 121 foster families in 17 local authorities in central Scotland (Minnis *et al.*, 2006). Teachers also completed an SDQ for the children in the study and foster children were encouraged to complete the SDQ on a laptop, during home visits. These were followed by interviews with the same carers and young people. Despite its scale, a limitation of this study is a lack of the participants' voices and views reported in the

findings. Data from the interviews seems to have been used to add some colour to the statistical analysis, for example 90% of the foster children in the study reported having been physically and emotionally abused or neglected, and 60% of those in the study had evidence of mental health issues (Minnis *et al.*, 2006). This study demonstrates that mental health problems are a significant factor for young people in 'mainstream foster care' and that agencies, such as Children and Adult Mental Health Services (CAMHS) are not offering the an appropriate model of support for these children (Minnis *et al.*, 2006).

McClung and Gayle (2010) drew on datasets from two large Scottish local authorities relating to educational achievement and carried out in-depth one-to-one interviews with thirty young people in care. A purposeful sampling method was taken to ensure the sample was characteristic of the looked after population in these local authorities. They concluded that the local authority, as corporate parents, had not yet wholly achieved an improvement for the children in their charge (McClung & Gayle, 2010). They conclude with a recommendation that more detailed empirical studies are required to the evidence base for policy framework development for young people in care (McClung & Gayle, 2010).

3.3.1.3 Views of current foster children on life in care

The aim of Goodyer's (2016) study was 'to understand how children made sense of their experiences of joining new foster families.' (2016 p189). In some ways, this study reflects the studies in the previous section, as it explores transitions, but in this case the transition is into foster care. Semi-structured interviews were used to elicit the views of 22 young people in foster care in England (Goodyer, 2016). Findings are reported in five main themes: information about moving to a new foster home; emotions connected with moving; sudden moves to foster care; loss of people, networks, community and possessions, and strategies and skills involved in moving (Goodyer, 2016 p191). She concludes, that whilst current policy frameworks prescribe an entitlement for children in care to be involved in decision effecting their lives, social work practice in this area remans inconsistent (Goodyer, 2016). Goodyer further argues that involving young people in the planning of moves and providing considered

information on foster families for children can help young people feel less emotionally distressed at this difficult time in their lives.

3.3.2 Family life

In order to discuss the findings from this study on family constructs, it was important to establish a framework that allowed for a discussion on 'family life' that reflected the tensions present for foster children when talking about family, both birth and foster. In order to generate this, I first 3.3.2.1 reviewed the literature on the language of family and explored research, both theoretical and empirical, to define 'notions of family to consider how it may be understood in people's everyday life' (McCarthy, 2012 p68). Second, in 3.3.2.2 I have reviewed the literature on family membership, men in the family and role models. This is a complex topic for children being raised in foster care, perhaps more so than residential or kinship care, where adults have defined roles and relationships to the young people that are less challenging, such as case worker or grandmother. In foster care, a potentially quasi-family structure can present substitute roles, such as foster mother, foster father or foster sibling that can require a fluid sense of self for the young person when navigating everyday life (Ward, 2011). Finally, in section 3.3.2.3, I discuss the lack of research exploring the development of relationships between children in one foster placement, who are not related by birth or to the foster carer. In this final section, I clarify the meaning of foster siblings, as they relate to this study. All three sections are not distinct, as family language, membership, roles, and relationships are intertwined.

3.3.2.1 The language of family

In this section, I provide an overview of the literature on the language defining family. I focus on literature that helps to provide some context to my discussion in Chapter 5 and the participants' accounts of their family life. To begin with, and whilst not explicitly researching within a care context, McCarthy's (2012) study explores togetherness, belonging and personhood through the relational language of family (McCarthy, 2012). It is beyond the capacity of this review to fully discuss the range of findings developed in McCarthy's study, here I draw on McCarthy's work to establish an understanding on my use of the term 'language of family' and to help ground my

analysis and discussion of the participants' accounts in this study. McCarthy provides an account of empirical materials from a range of global cultures and relational themes to suggest 'family' can present differing understandings and interpretations of relationality and the individual (McCarthy, 2012). Family can be considered a set of co-resident individuals or those in relationships but can also move beyond this to evoke a sense of shared identity and personhood that 'goes beyond the (relational) individual, or dyadic relationships' (McCarthy, 2012p 84), to a 'unit' or 'family' of close-knit-selves that could be involved in an understanding of personhood, or as McCarthy defines it 'the social person'. McCarthy draws on sociological and anthropological approaches which argue for the importance of an understanding on everyday language, and through which social actors construct their social worlds and give meaning to their experiences (2012, p69). It is this language of family, and the way in which the participants in this study negotiate their personhood, in interactions with others that is of particular relevance for this thesis.

Also from sociology, and again not focusing on a care context but exploring family structures and experiences of young people affected by parental substance abuse in Scotland, Wilson *et al.* (2012) moves away from the dominant discourse on 'ordinary' family experiences and towards the study of personal life and contemporary families (Wilson, Cunningham-Burley, Bancroft, & Backett-Milburn, 2012). Again, as with McCarthy (2012) above, Wilson *et al.* argue for the importance of developing concepts of language, which allow for the communication of emotional and symbolic significance for children who experience difficulties or disruption in parental-type relationships (Wilson *et al.*, 2012). They argue that, 'Such a language might also better communicate these concerns more broadly, potentially helping to avoid the further marginalisation of such young people in political and policy rhetoric around families.' (Wilson *et al.*, 2012 p126); the importance of a positive lexicon, in order to talk about lived experiences in foster care is discussed in section (9.4). Both studies highlight the need for further research into a 'language of family' and how this can help researchers and marginalised groups of young people navigate belonging and forms of family in less stigmatising ways.

Making sense of family was the subject for Boddy (2018) whose research draws on two key cross national studies in Europe, *Beyond Contact* (Boddy *et al.*, 2014) and, as a work in progress at the time of Boddy's study, and now published, *Against all Odds* (Boddy, Lausten, Backe-Hansen, & Gundersen, 2019) to explore the role of policy discourses that manifests abstract terms in the language of care, such as reunification, contact and permanence (Boddy, 2018 p24), rather than a language of family. A deficit lexicon around life in care can stigmatise 'family' for young people. This lexicon sets them aside from norms and obscures emotional and structural complexities of family life for them, both in birth and care families (Boddy, 2018). Interestingly, Boddy also warns against the dangers of homogenising both 'ordinary' and 'care families', as this can be misleading, as both are diverse and complicated in their structures and practices (Boddy, 2018). In addition, Boddy's study also included empirical data, from a qualitative longitudinal approach drawing on the views of 21 care experienced young people (CEYP) in England aged 16-32 years and who would identify as 'doing well', which is defined in Boddy's study as 'in education', 'employment' or 'training' (Boddy, 2018). The aim of Boddy's study was to explore and challenge an enforced narrative of a life constructed through problematising questions that reify perceptions of 'ordinary family' (Boddy, 2018). Participants were interviewed to gather information on four topics: education and employment, living situation, family and free time, they were also asked to take pictures over a week that represented what was important to them in their everyday life. A second interview, a week later, focused on music choices that reflected important meanings for the participants, and a discussion on the photographs taken was used to develop understanding of the participants expectations of the future (Boddy, 2018). A final interview was held a year later and focused on how their expectations had been met or otherwise. This final interview also incorporated a future life chart addressing the same four topics as interview one (Boddy, 2018). Boddy reports that the analysis of the data from interviews demonstrated how diverse and dynamic 'family' was for the participants, when leaving care and transitioning on to adult life (Boddy, 2018). Boddy also reports that the experiences of the young people in her study support Edwards *et al.*'s (2012) argument on the importance of developing a language of family, within social policy, to challenge policy constructs and language, such as contact and permanence (Boddy,

2018; Edwards, McCarthy, & Gillies, 2012), which is discussed in greater depth in section 9.4.

My analysis of the literature on a language of family, as it pertains to children in care and specifically foster care, has highlighted three key areas. Firstly, it is important not to normalise 'ordinary family' in positive terms and therefore reify a 'care family context' as deficit. Secondly, the need to be aware of and acknowledge the role of policy discourses in shaping the language used within a foster family and by foster children, including terms like contact and permanence; and thirdly to embrace and acknowledge the fluid nature by which foster children can navigate the emotional and symbolic construction of their everyday experiences through language. I now move on to review the literature around family membership, men in the family and role models for foster children.

3.3.2.2 Family membership, men in the family and role models

Thomas *et al.* (2017) is discussed in section 3.3.1.1, as a good example of an empirical study drawing on the views of foster children. Here, I draw on the same work in the development of family membership, as it relates to foster children navigating their place in both birth and foster families; and the roles that support or hinder their everyday experiences. Thomas *et al.* (2017) report that family membership impacts upon outcomes for foster children, in both cultural and systemic discourses that privilege ideologies of what families 'should be'. Indeed, they suggest that the stigma of care, in both personal and public forms, can be manifest long after foster care has ended. Personal stigma encapsulates the internal struggles with societal discourses, and public stigma emanates from the discriminatory behaviours, stereotypes and prejudices that constitute ideologies that preserve internalised shame and external judgement:

> In the context of foster care and (former) foster children, cultural beliefs about "family" arguably fuel both public and private perceptions of, and related outcomes for, individuals and families involved with the foster care system (Thomas *et al.*, 2017 p240).

Thomas *et al.*'s work provides a critical perspective on defining family and broadens this to allow foster children to talk about family membership, *Not Just Blood*, (Thomas' study title) but positioning family, as 'those who are there for you' (Thomas *et al.*, 2017 p249). Given my specific role as a single foster father, I now move on to review the literature on men in the family and role models in the lives of foster children.

The title of Biblarz and Stacey's study *How Does the Gender of Parents Matter?*, seems to be a good place to start this section (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010). The authors suggest that this question assumes that mothers and fathers, woman and men parent differently and that gender conflates with family structure. Located in the USA, but not specifically looking at children in care, Biblarz and Stacey's (2010) research reviewed studies across two parent families, both same and different sex co-parents, single mothers and single fathers to assess child well-being, and whether any or all of these parental models reflect family ideals or are ideal families. In answer to the question raised in the title of their study, that parenting skills are not exclusive, indeed, they challenge an 'entrenched conviction that children need both a mother and a father' (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010 p16). They argue that the gender of parents influences nuanced and novel aspects of parent-child relationships and plays a minor significance in the emotional, social and psychological adjustment and success for children (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010).

Turning from fathers generally to foster fathers, I begin with a review of Gilligan's work on the role of male foster carers, within fostering couples (Gilligan, 2000). In setting out a case for male foster carers as a neglected resource, Gilligan posits several factors that highlight the importance of a positive relationship with men as foster parents: including challenging historical male relationship for foster children as erratic, unreliable, absent, intimidating, or violent. Indeed, Gilligan reminds us that the role of a foster father may be 'laden with meaning and therapeutic significance for many foster children' (Gilligan, 2000 p64). Indeed, I return to a specific discussion on the role of foster fathers in new forms of family models in (8.5.3). Whilst not explicitly named, Gilligan goes on to touch on facets of social pedagogy mentioned earlier, and the importance of foster fathers as appropriate role models, who can provide *everyday*

therapy through warmth, fun and safety (Gilligan, 2000). Newstone continues Gilligan's line of argument by exploring how foster fathers perceive their role in shaping outcomes like health and education for their foster children (Newstone, 2000). In addition to Gilligan's insights on the importance of everyday emotional support, Newstone also draws our attention to the importance of day-to-day life for foster children:

> Male carers who go further and offer a high level of nurturing care, and an interested, active involvement in children's day-to- day life, may improve young people's outcomes in key aspects such as health, education, self-care and domestic skills. (Newstone, 2000 p44)

Newstone concludes that male foster carers remain an underused resource, where agencies and local authorities continue to see the 'main carer' in a foster family as female and discussion around male carers seem primarily in terms of risks (Newstone, 2000). Wilson worked with Newstone and Fyson to move the research along and explored the role of foster fathers by collection quantitative and qualitative data on all foster fathers registered with an independent fostering agency in England (Wilson, Fyson, & Newstone, 2007). The aim of this study, was to research the motivations of foster fathers to foster by asking them about their personal and professional attributes, and their understanding on the role of a foster father, and what they contribute to caring for their foster children (Wilson *et al.*, 2007). A questionnaire was sent to all 118 male carers registered with the agency, 69 returned a completed form and 30 agreed to take part in interviews. While 90% of the foster fathers participating in the study were married the other 10% were co-habiting with female partners. There were no single male foster fathers participating in this study (Wilson *et al.*, 2007). Perhaps challenging the findings in Biblarz's study above, Wilson *et al.* suggest there is a bifurcation in roles and that male foster fathers in the study tended to take on perceived masculine roles, such as DIY and watching sport, whereas a greater number of roles were seen by male carers as the responsibility of the female carer, such as teaching self-care, laundry, cooking, contact with school and social work department (Wilson *et al.*, 2007). They go on to note that while the male carers reported most roles were shared equally, a tally of duties suggested otherwise. Wilson *et al.* reported that the

foster fathers see themselves playing a distinctive and positive contribution to resolving trouble and difficulties in the lives of the children they foster (Wilson *et al.*, 2007). They also state a need for further research on what this contribution may entail.

An Australian study explored the views of a group of foster fathers on their role as fathers and how they went about creating 'family' (Riggs, Delfabbro, & Augoustinos, 2010). The researchers carried out one to one interviews and drew on a focus group with 31 foster fathers, who predominantly provided long term foster care (Riggs *et al.*, 2010). Findings from the study reported several domains in which the men could contribute to shaping the lives of the children they were bringing up, including; healing prior abuse and sharing a sense of meaning and values with their foster children (Riggs *et al.*, 2010). It is important to remember, in line with Biblarz and Stacey (2010) study, and as Doucet (2006) reminds us, that men who address the full range of roles discussed in Wilson *et al.* (2007) do not become mothers in their parenting of children. Riggs concludes with a reminder that the views, both positive and negative, of single carers are an important contribution to knowledge by challenging and reworking what it means to be a father and hegemonic masculinities (Riggs *et al.*, 2010). In terms of foster fathers as upbringers, the final comment is:

> Taking a child focus that emphasizes modelling supportive and caring parent-child relationships and non-gender normative modes of fathering may have much to contribute to challenging the oppressive social norms that continue to result in high rates of child abuse, both in Australia and internationally. (Riggs *et al.*, 2010 p36)

The importance of pedagogical relationships and modelling positive male role models can also help to shape the lives of those being brought up in care. I close this section by returning to Gilligan (2012) which is a review of the available literature on the role of male foster carers in providing a 'secure base', involving the carer being available, having a reflective capacity, and building self-esteem in the young person through promoting autonomy and family membership. Gilligan also states that male foster fathers may play a special role in cultivating social capital, as an increasingly valuable resource in people's lives, and for foster children in their families (Gilligan, 2012).

This is of course dependant on the social capital of the foster father and as Gilligan states:

> It cannot be assumed that all foster families or foster fathers have extensive social capital, but it is reasonable to propose the importance of the issue as a dimension of the foster father's role, given, among other things, his boundary-spanning role between the inner and the outer world of the foster home (Gilligan, 2012 p422).

In this section I have explored the role of foster fathers through the limited literature available. I have reviewed literature that explored their role in supporting their foster children's upbringing. As Gilligan and Newstone have highlighted, the everyday aspects of life play a significant part in developing a 'secure base' for foster children (Gilligan, 2000) and improving outcomes, in terms of health and education (Newstone, 2000).

3.3.2.3 Foster Siblings

In this section I review literature exploring the views of both foster and birth children in foster families. There is a growing body of literature on the views of birth children on family life with foster children at home (Adams, Hassett, & Lumsden, 2018; Gypen, West, Van Holen, & Vanderfaeillie, 2020; Silverstein & Livingston Smith, 2009; Thompson & McPherson, 2011; Thompson, McPherson, & Marsland, 2016; D. Williams, 2017). A central thread to these studies were the views from birth children on the impact the foster children made upon their relationships with their parents. Themes include threats to relationships and value of their (birth children) roles in the family (Adams *et al.*, 2018), as well as experiences of grief, separation and loss when a foster child leaves the family (D. Williams, 2017). From a contrasting perspective, there is also growing literature on the views of parents on the impact of fostering on their birth children (Ellingsen, Stephens and Størksen, 2012; Thompson, McPherson and Marsland, 2016), captured in the title of Thompson *et al's* (2016) study *'Am I damaging my own family?': Relational changes between foster carers and their birth children*. Thompson *et al.* (2016) call for a shift in fostering agencies to develop carers as more professionalised in their roles; and for them to adopt professional reflective tools used in counselling and psychotherapy to explore relationships with both birth

and foster families. Interestingly, the authors acknowledge that investment required in this approach may draw criticism:

> There may be some criticism of such an approach which is one step away from professionalising parenthood. It could also be argued that the resources required for such an approach may be better spent investing in attachment-based interventions with parents to prevent children going into care which is an emerging area of practice (Thompson, McPherson and Marsland, 2016 p63)

The work of Ruth Emond on relationships between young people in Scottish residential care offers an interesting perspective (Emond, 2003, 2014; Punch, McIntosh, Emond, & Dorrer, 2009). Emond's 2003 study explored the way in which young people in residential care support one another through dynamics of status, power, and powerlessness. The findings confound previously held assumptions on strict hierarchical structures in residential units. 'Young people in this study were shown to have no fixed roles or group positions and as a result all experienced moments of being both most and least powerful' (Emond, 2003 p334). These moments were in complex relationships between social context, action, and actors. Emond's study carries this notion of complex peer relationships into her 2014 study and explores how these relationships help young people navigate a care identity in a school setting (Emond, 2014). The links between identity and place, both home and school were key in how the young people felt senses of belonging:

> It appeared that place, in this context the children's home as 'home,' had significance for children's identities, and in turn was linked to their subjective experiences. To be able to identify with a place and to be identified positively with it creates a feeling of security for children (Emond, 2014 p200)

Interestingly, the findings from this study suggest that social work, residential staff and school staff overlook the important role of unit peer relationships as both a source of stress and support.

3.3.3 Gender, Masculinities and Caring

In the previous section, I discussed the literature that relates specifically to men as foster carers (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010; Gilligan, 2000; Newstone, 2000; K. Wilson *et al.*, 2007). I also briefly touched on the topic of gender and masculinities (Riggs *et al.*, 2010) and the role that foster fathers play in 'creating family'. Except for these studies, there appears to be a dearth of literature on gender, masculinities and caring, specifically within foster care. Interestingly, and underpinning the research question in this thesis, academic studies around gender and childcare seem to be predominantly located in discourses around the role of men in childcare. Gender is a multifaceted and complex topic spanning equality to differences, and from perceived roles to gender stereotypes (Featherstone, Hooper, Scourfield, & Taylor, 2010; Hollway, 2006; Nentwich, Poppen, Schälin, & Vogt, 2013). This section examines how gender, masculinities and caring are understood in the literature. In this section, I provide a review of literature in order to argue for recognition of gender as non-binary in terms of perceived roles and to contribute to discourses around masculinities and men as primary carers. Whilst the focus of this thesis is foster care, I have included research relating to childcare roles and residential care, as these are the main areas in which the topics of gender, masculinities and caring are addressed (Cameron, Moss and Owen, 1999; Cameron, 2001; Smith, 2009). To begin with, I set the scene by discussing perceived gendered roles within early years childcare settings.

The title of Cameron *et al's* (1999) *Men in the Nursery* left me wondering if there was an interrobang at the end. The study looked at the dynamics of women and men working in early childcare settings, such as nurseries and family centres (1999). The premise for this study was 'why are there so few men in childcare work?'(p9). The researchers looked areas such as staff conditions and pay, ways of talking, staff social life, staff teams, and worker (dis)satisfaction through the lens of gender to understand how gender was perceived by the workers and influenced their roles within the nursery. A key question and developing theme within the study was the part that perceived gendered roles played for men in caring roles:

> That work in centres for young children is underpinned by gendered understandings of the job … the work of childcare is not only gendered by virtue of distribution of the workforce, but the ideas on which the work is based are also infused with gendered understandings of roles … through the experiences of the men workers, compared to those of women, we can see that the work is threaded with ideas about caring as substitute motherhood. (Cameron, Moss and Owen, 1999 p158)

A key issue running through the literature, is to some extent demonstrated by the above quote, and a tendency to reduce gender to a binary division of female and male. Cameron et al's study highlights the need for 'multiple gender identities in order to lend complexity to the gender categories of men and women' (1999: p158); as this allows us to acknowledge the diversity within gender identities. The researchers go on to state, that this acknowledgement would allow for a broader distinction and discussion on 'what men do' in childcare. Beyond the perceived gendered roles for men working with children, it provides a platform on which to discuss men as primary carers and upbringers.

I addressed the topic of 'men as mothers' in section 3.3.2.2 and in this section, I respond to Cameron et al's (1999) and Doucet's (2006) call for a broader understanding on roles and gender, by taking as a starting point the assumption that a non-binary position on gender and roles is required to explore my role as primary carer. Not that my research question asks for a re-evaluation of my role as single parent and an attempt to answer Doucet's question 'do men mother'; rather, that a less binary starting position on gender and roles is required to explore my role in the upbringing of the boys in this study. Featherstone (2010) also draws on Doucet's (2006) work when discussing engaging fathers, and promoting gender equality, and suggests that gender equality and gender difference are highly interdependent. In this context, Featherstone (2010) reminds us that gender equality should be 'an objective of government policies in relation to the balancing of work and care' (p177); and perhaps most importantly, that equality and difference can be interdependent, and that difference does not necessarily mean disadvantaged.

Focusing on men and relationships with children, Hearn and Pringle argue for the importance of addressing masculinities for understanding the role of men in childcare Hearn and Pringle state:

> It is important to consider the wide range of ways in which men relate or do not relate to children and young people. In both academic and policy discussions, men's relations to children are often reduced to the issues of fatherhood, paternity, and parental leave, and increasingly fathers' 'rights' post-separation and divorce. (Hearn and Pringle, 2006 p366)

Nentwich *et al.*, (2013) explored masculine identities for male childcare workers in Switzerland, through a developed concept of identity dissonance; in which the researchers found that workers drew on a range of discursive practices in order to legitimise their subject position. Amongst the discursive practices discussed in Nentwich *et al's* (2013) work are two that resonate with the aims and findings of this thesis; firstly, 'building the male niche' and secondly, 'becoming a pedagogue'. Building the male niche was a reaction and challenge to perceived ideal masculinities and discourses around 'male breadwinners' for the participants in the study. Within the context of employment in childcare, a male niche discourse allows for an emphasis on differences:

> This niche enables men to maintain a masculine identity when working in a female-dominated profession. Difference between men and women and their work is emphasized by means of several different, but still related, discursive devices that are all closely connected to what is perceived as stereotypical masculinity in terms of skills, tasks, and interests. (Nentwich *et al.*, 2013 p331)

Nentwich *et al.* (2013) presents a picture of masculinity in early years childcare, as an alternative, positive model of childcare, which allows men to add additional skills and forms of relationships, in a thus-far female-dominated employment world. Interestingly, both in terms of gender, masculinities and caring; the male participants in the study downplayed gender by developing a subject position as pedagogue (2013). Drawing on professional goals, knowledge and technical terms, the participants legitimised their role within the nursery:

> Emphasizing pedagogical skills and interests enables men to create and make use of a legitimate position. Unlike the other five practices, in this one gender is not made relevant and the position of the pedagogue is potentially also accessible for women. Nevertheless, the practice of 'becoming the pedagogue' does not move beyond gender ((Nentwich *et al.*, 2013 p340).

This shift in focus from gender and masculinities to that of pedagogue and bringer of different skills is linked to the contributions from this thesis, and its location within social pedagogy and upbringers. My role as upbringer for the boys in this study has been about values, beliefs, and skills, as passed on between one generation and the next within a caring relationship. Gender has been present, both in our family construct, boys and men, and within the research question, single male carer.

3.4 Conclusion

In summary, in this chapter I have reviewed a range of literature which inform this study's aim to explore what it means to grow up in foster care. To do this, I have taken a focused perspective on social pedagogy through which upbringing has emerged as the most fitting way to discuss the processes of being raised in care. To support this framework, I have teased out notions of *Bildung* and the common third to develop *Erziehung*; and the process of intergenerational pedagogy that exists between my foster sons and myself. In order to scope the research landscape, it was necessary to review the existing empirical literature that seeks the views of foster children and came to an understanding that first person accounts are only sought on relationships with birth family, education, health and outcomes. There is to date, no research exploring the views of children in foster care on what it means to them, or their views on how they have been raised in foster care. This may be due to a lack of a lexicon or language of family that allows them to make sense of their experiences to others, and my review of the literature on a language of family echoed this. The roles of members within families drew me towards the role a foster father plays for the children he cares for.

My review of the literature on foster siblings identified two existing and growing bodies of literature. The first on birth children's perspectives of their parents as foster carers to other children and conversely, the second on foster parents' perspectives on

the impact of foster children on their family. Both categories of studies could come under the loose heading of foster siblings. However, there appears to be no studies looking at how young people from different birth families navigate their relationship within a foster family. Particularly one that has no birth children. I have also included a section on the current research discourse on gender, masculinities and caring. In this last section, I have threaded together the need for a shift in perceived binary gendered roles and drawn on the work on Nentwich to offer two interesting perspectives on men who care, through developing a male niche and becoming a pedagogue (Nentwich *et al.*, 2013); both of which are pertinent within the context of this study. I now move on to discuss the methods and methodology.

Chapter 4 - Methodology and Methods

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I begin by revisiting the context and purpose of this study and the need to develop knowledge through young people's first-person accounts of their experiences of growing up in foster care. Given the specific nature of the population in the research question, and my role as an insider researcher (Skelton, 2008), I move on to a section detailing the processes involved in participation and who did and did not take part in this study. Next, I discuss the theoretical perspectives underpinning my approach to this study, including links between my ontological and epistemological positions, which are located within the interpretivist paradigm (Ritchie, Lewis, McNaughton Nicholls, & Ormston, 2014) and narrative as a methodology. Thereafter, I give an account of the research strategy developed for this study; including a clarification on my use of insider researcher, a justification for the use of narrative interviews (Elliott, 2011), and my approach to my analysis with a focus on rigor and trustworthiness (Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017). Given the importance of a reflexive approach to this study, I provide a separate and detailed account of reflexivity in section 4.6. My account of reflexivity lays the foundations for the next section and my discussion on ethical considerations, including a discussion of both procedural and practice ethics. I close this chapter by establishing my conceptual framework for research rigour, and a discussion on credibility and transferability, in support of trustworthiness.

4.2 Context and Purpose

In order to discuss the purpose of this study, it is important to scope out the research landscape that it is located within. My aim for this study, was to explore the stories told by the boys and young men from one foster home, about what an upbringing in care with me as their single foster father, meant to them. Whilst interviews with young people in care are often used to supplement studies, such as those reviewed in section (3.3.1), and which covered a range of topics from maintaining contact with birth family (Baker *et al.*, 2016; Thomas *et al.*, 2017), education and mental health outcomes

(Cunningham & Diversi, 2012)(McClung & Gayle, 2010). There was also a study exploring the views of children as they move into foster care (Goodyer, 2016); however, 'there is a dearth of research which focuses on young people's voices and experiences' whilst living in foster care (Burgess, Rossvoll, Wallace, & Daniel, 2010 p10). Viewing the research landscape from a different perspective to look at funding; it is important to acknowledge a preference from central and devolved UK governments on policy development that drives research with CEYP which focuses on statistical outcomes, wellbeing and performance indicators. The professionalisation of foster care and the regulations around duty to care can overshadow the interdependent and everyday workings of family life (Pithouse & Rees, 2011), such a focus is distilled into research grants and, in turn, policy development:

> Policy and guidelines address how we should care for the generalised vulnerable child. By contrast, foster carers care about a particular child. This raises important questions about how well care is understood by those who define and oversee the fostering task. (Pithouse and Rees, 2011 p198)

In addition to Pithouse and Rees' observation on misunderstandings around generalisation and transferability from populations to individual needs, are tensions about the ethical sensitivities for studies in this area. I discuss the ethical approaches involved in this study, in section 4.7; In which I highlight an ongoing discourse around CEYP's rights to participate in the decisions made about them and their views about the power they felt they had to influence decision making (Munro, 2001), which leads on to discussions on CEYP voices in research, and issues such as consent and adult involvement, as barriers located in ethical studies (Heptinstall, 2000):

> Research in which the participation rights of these children can be more fully embraced, emphasizing, as it does, the validity of the 'here and now' accounts of children who, within this model, are viewed as subjects worthy of study in their own right rather than as the focus of research within an adult-led agenda. (Winter, 2006 p60)

It is within this gap that this study is located. Privileging the voices of those in care, their stories and addressing this in an ethical manner that addresses the tensions and issues mentioned above. I now move on to discuss the participants in this study.

4.3 Participants

My research question has a specific population of young people in care and raises ethical issues because of my position in relation to the study. A less ethically challenging approach would have been to look at the experiences of young men growing up in care in placements with other carers. However, when my review of the literature found no studies carried out by foster carers with the young people in their care, I began to consider the advantages which such a study would bring. My situation, as both foster father and researcher, presented a unique opportunity, as it allowed an examination of the co-constructed narrative between carer and foster child. 'Co-constructed narratives are stories jointly constructed by relational partners about epiphanies in their lives' (Ellis, 2008 p84). I discuss both the tensions and benefits of my two roles, and address these through areas such as access, trust, existing relationships and trustworthiness in greater detail, in the reflexivity section (4.6) below. This study also shines a light on the importance of understanding intergenerational relationships within the processes up upbringing, discussed in section (8.3). It is for these reasons, despite the ethical challenges discussed in the ethics section (4.7) below, that I have persevered with this approach.

The decision on who to approach to participate was influenced by several factors. I have fostered over thirty young men over my time as a foster carer and decided to set the criteria for participation as those that were in a full-time placement or respite placement that was for six month or longer. From those that met this criterion (n22), I was able to contact fourteen through social media or by phone calls. Of these fourteen, I excluded one from the study for ethical reasons, as his placement with me had broken down after two years, due to an incident with his birth family, which resulted in him being moved on to other carers. From the remaining thirteen, four replied and agreed to take part and two of the three boys living with me at the time also agreed to take part, making a total of six participants. The youngest young man living in our foster family declined to take part. He was twelve at the time of the interviews and did not want to talk about life away from his birth family; however, as

I highlight in section (8.6) on the limitations of this study, he has recently stated he feels he has missed out on the story told by the thesis and has some regrets. From those who met the criteria above but did not take part (*n*6), two did not reply to my contact attempts and four made contact but declined to take part. It would not be ethical to report the individual detailed reasons for four who made contact and declined to take part. However, the reasons were around family, workload and health issues.

Pseudonym	Ethnicity	Age Moved In	Age at Interview	Placement Duration	Placement Type	Father Now
Barry	White Scottish	13	27	2 Yrs 1 Month	Respite	Yes
James	Black British	14	27	2 Yrs 1 Month	Respite	Yes
Declan	White Scottish	14	23	3 Yrs 7 Months	Full Time	Yes
Christian	White Scottish	11	18	1 Yr 2 Months	Full Time	No
Oliver	White Scottish	16	20	4 Yrs 4 Months	Full Time	Yes
Aaron	White Scottish	12	19	4 Yrs - Date	Full Time	No

Table 4.1 Participant Placement Details

4.4 Theoretical Perspectives

In considering the theoretical perspectives underpinning my research I draw on Denzin and Lincoln's explanation of research, as a series of questions. 'What is the nature of reality? (ontology), what is the relationship between the inquirer and the known? (epistemology) and how do we know the world or gain knowledge of it? (methodology)' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008 p31). Denzin and Lincoln describe a research paradigm, as a net that contains a researcher's ontological, epistemological, and methodological beliefs and positions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). Similarly, Blaikie describes paradigms as philosophical perspectives in which research strategies and designs are located (Blaikie, 2007). Next, I scope out the interpretivist paradigm that my study is located within and the links with a narrative methodology.

4.4.1 Paradigms

In response to the first of Denzin and Lincoln's inquiry criteria, and 'what is the nature of reality?', in this section I provide a connection between my interpretivist approach and a narrative methodology and the use of interviews as a method in sub section (4.5.2). My approach to this study is located within the interpretivist paradigm. Interpretivism recognises the reflective nature of the researcher and their role as interpreter of the data (Creswell, 2007). An interpretivist approach also recognises the importance of language and discourse, as well as issues of power and authority in all elements of a qualitative inquiry (Creswell, 2007). Interpretivism is positioned as a critique to positivism and acknowledges the role of subjective meaning in social action (Bryman, 2008). Ontologically, I take the view of social constructionism on a social world that is jointly constructed through interaction with others and that this forms the basis for shared assumptions about reality (Elder-Vass, 2012), as opposed to a naïve realism, which holds an objectivist epistemology in attempts to predict, describe or generalise phenomena (Bryman, 2014). I argue that, how we make sense of the world is in part due to who we are and our personal experiences. My constructionist epistemological approach allows for the use of narrative interviews to gather the storied accounts of the boys in this study (Riessman, 2008), to try to understand their experiences. In the next section I give an account of the research strategy used to collect the data in this study.

4.4.2 Methodology

Narrative is an ambiguous term in research and can be understood by different researchers to mean different things in different research settings. A researcher's ontology and research disciplines will influence their understanding and use of the term narrative. In this thesis, I draw on the work of researchers such as (Cortazzi & Riessman, 1993), working in the disciplines of education and sociology, in order to develop my understanding and use of narratives. I also draw on authors, such as (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Czarniawska, 2004; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005), as they have developed analytical models that suit the topic of research and the storied accounts of life in care told by the boys in this study. To begin with, I use Polkinghorne's work to explore two facets of narrative inquiries (Polkinghorne, 1995).

Drawing on the work of Bruner (1985), Polkinghorne defines two primary kinds of narrative inquiry as, an *analysis of narratives* (AoN) and *narrative analysis* (NA). AoN, takes a deductive approach that creates descriptions of 'themes that hold across stories or in taxonomies of types of stories, characters, or settings' (Polkinghorne 1995, p12), it is a mode of inquiry that finds 'conceptual manifestations among the stories collected as data' (Polkinghorne, 1995 p12). Stories are plots that have a beginning, middle and end. They can be sourced from written accounts, diaries and personal journals, however, interviews could be considered the main source of data in this approach (Bryman, 2004). In most instances, AoN requires a selection of stories, rather than an account from one individual.

The second kind of narrative inquiry identified by Polkinghorne is *narrative analysis*, in which researchers take an inductive approach to generate descriptions of events and happenings from several stories to 'synthesize or configure them by means of a plot in to a story or stories' (Polkinghorne, 1995). The result of this analysis is the development of a narrative plot. It is the researcher's responsibility to configure the elements of data into a story that unifies meaning to a goal or purpose. Researchers could use questions such as 'how did this happen?' or 'can you tell me how this came about?', in order to encourage the storyteller. Researchers need to have 'some

conception of the unity of totality of a system with an outline or boundaries' (Stake, 1988 p.225). A bounded system in this case, could be the boys' time in care or life after care. As the researcher in this study, I must also be aware of constructive aspects and the dialogic production in the story development (see section on reflexivity 4.6). In summary, the function of narrative analysis is to answer, 'how and why a particular outcome came about' and to help me to understand how the boys are representing themselves and their experiences. As an approach, it moves from elements to stories.

In this study, I have mainly drawn on an AoN approach, although some aspects of NA were used in terms of an inductive perspective on plots and twists. An understanding of both AoN and NA was important, as it informed the form of interview used. My reading of the literature on care experienced children and my experiences as a carer, highlighted topics that helped shape the conversation guide used in our interviews (Appendix B). Broad topics, such as education, fathers and identity, allowed the boys to talk about their time with me in care. These subjects were used in all the interviews and provided broad discussion points that were common across all the boys' accounts consistent with AoN approach. However, within these broad subjects, the boys generated stories that involved plots, twists and individual characters and this allowed me to use aspects of narrative analysis (Cortazzi & Riessman, 1993). These strands of narrative are present across the findings chapters and include social workers, teachers, birth family and accounts of life in care with me.

The boys' stories are central to this inquiry and I will now provide some context and definitions to the term 'story', as used in this thesis:

> In everyday oral storytelling, a speaker connects events into a sequence that is consequential for later action and for the meanings that the speaker wants the listener to take away from the story. (Riessman 2008, p3)

Riessman's quote introduces the topics of stories, sequences, meanings and their understanding for both researcher and interviewee. It is worthwhile expanding these terms and provide clarification on their use in my writing. The term narrative and story can be used interchangeably, however in this thesis, I use narrative as a wider term, following (Barter & Renold, 2000; Holland, 2010; Scho, Biggart, Ward, & Larsson,

2015), signifying a written text, or whole interview or part of an interview in which some kind of story or explanation may be given.

The dictionary of narratology defines a story as 'a causal sequence of events pertinent to a character or characters seeking to solve a problem or reach a goal' (Prince 2003 p93), this echoes the importance of sequencing in the quote from Riessman above. According to Andrews, Squire and Tamboukou, stories can be further divided in to 'small' and 'big' stories and argue that we must pay attention 'the micro-linguistic and social structure of everyday, small narrative phenomena that occur naturally between people' such as text messages and emails (Andrews *et al.* 2013 p8). Given the boys' use of social media, I had considered exploring their use of platforms such as Facebook, Snapchat and Instagram, as a potential source of data. However, this approach would have had limitations, both in terms of the ethics of accessing their social media accounts (even with their permission), and indeed, what data gathered in this way would have provided in terms of adding to the boys' stories given in their interviews. Ultimately, I was interested in the stories they told me not the stories they told the world.

Cortazzi and Riessman suggests that, even within semi and fully structured qualitative interviews, not specifically designed to elicit narrative, stories can emerge as a response to a set question (1993). This supports my acknowledgement of both AoN and NA described above and present in this study. Stories are a way of making sense of events or happenings that individuals recall when prompted. Stories can have a beginning, middle and end, like a good novel, they involve a predicament, conflict or struggle, a protagonist or main character(s) and a sequence with implied causality (i.e. plot) during which the predicament may be resolved in some fashion (Carter, 1993). In the boys' stories, characters such as social workers, teachers and parents all play roles in the events leading up to, during and after life in care. This in turn supports Clandinin and Connelly's analysis of stories by the development of a three-dimensional structure. The *interaction* described as both personal and social, *continuity* listed as past, present and future and the *situation* which refers to the place or setting (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). This latter view is shared by Denzin and Lincoln, who also emphasize the importance of temporality and causal sequencing for

narrator and audience (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The co-constructed narratives from the boys and myself are often personal accounts of events and will include reasons for when and why actions were taken and what the eventual results of that action were for them and others in their lives.

In this study, I am interested in the storied accounts the boys give of their life in care with me. The identification of 'truths' or factual accounts of what happened to the boys in care are not the focus of this study. The relationship between truth and narrative research is the source of some interesting discussion in the literature. For example, O'Dea calls for a substitution of established criteria, such as reliability and validity, in favour of aesthetic criteria in the form of authenticity, when exploring truth in narrative studies (O'Dea, 1994). Christopher moves this call along by contending that interpretivism should embrace philosophical aspects of pragmatism in order that narrative researchers' claims are given valid acceptance:

> The narratives provided by the participants and the researcher are rich with information, useful and practical for application and for their own sake. One possible way to advance the credibility of qualitative research methodology in general, and narrative research methodology in particular, involves an integration that has broader appeal. The integration of pragmatism with interpretivism, I have argued, provides for an ability to enhance the virtues while simultaneously covering up the pitfalls of narrative research methodology. (Christopher, 2016 p117)

I am interested in the story told to me as their carer and in reflecting on why the boys have constructed their accounts in the way that they have. It is this unique relationship between foster carer as researcher and the participants in this study, that sets this thesis aside from other inquiries with care experienced children in foster care. In order to generate the boys' stories, my chosen method was a narrative interview (Riessman, 2008) and in the next section, I give an account of my approach as both foster father and researcher.

4.5 Research Strategy

In this section I provide an account of the strategy used to answer the research question and to give an account of methods used to collect the boys' stories. My position as both the boys' foster father and researcher presents some significant epistemological and methodological challenges which I aim to address here. This section begins to address the topic of trustworthiness in this study, discussed in more detail in section 4.8, by providing what Lincoln and Guba define as an auditable decision trail in my analysis process 4.5.2, towards dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I begin with a clarification on my use of insider, as opposed, to outsider researcher.

4.5.1 Insider or Outsider Researcher

Central to this study's research question and methodological approach, was my decision to work with my foster sons, rather than other young people in foster care, outside of our foster family. This in turn led to my decision to use face-to-face interviews is supported by my epistemological position on the joint construction of narratives, described in section (4.5.2). I am aware that face-to-face interviews present challenges, particularly when the researcher knows the interviewees; tensions around power and identity (Hackett, 2017) and in specific relation to narrative approaches and issues of voice and representation (Byrne, 2017), where language and meaning 'is often seen to be problematic within interpretive research as, it is argued, language is not neutral' (Byrne, 2017 p38). However, Talbot (1999) reminds us that there are distinct advantages to the insider researcher role, as participants 'would never have shared certain aspects of their experiences with outsiders' (Talbot, 1999 p58). It is important to clarify what is meant by 'insider research' in this study; and to define the 'dichotomy of insider versus outsider status' (Dwyer, 2009 p80). Whilst I am not an insider with the participants, as I did not grow up, nor have I been in foster care, I am an insider in terms of the research question, as part of the care community and our foster family. As such, I am not an outsider, in terms of research objectivity or relational distance from the participants. In this thesis, I use the term insider to describe my part in the research question and out foster family:

> Whether the researcher is an insider, sharing the characteristic, role, or experience under study with the participants, or an outsider to the commonality shared by participants, the personhood of the researcher, including her or his

> membership status in relation to those participating in the research, is an essential and ever-present aspect of the investigation. (Dwyer, 2009 p55)

Both the ethics and reflexivity sections within this chapter are part of my audit trail towards Dwyer's criteria of essential and ever-present. I share Adler and Adler's view that 'the distinction between researcher and participant has traditionally existed more in theory than in practice'(Adler & Adler, 1987 p85). The Adlers' 1996 research explores the role of parents as researchers and highlights both the advantages and disadvantages of this researcher position. Amongst the advantages are a diminished role pretence, where researchers 'create a set of behaviours and meanings associated with studying the members' (Adler & Adler, 1996 p40). There is no such pretence in my study, as the boys are fully aware of my role as foster father and the purpose of my study, as we discussed this openly before, during and after the interviews. However, I would challenge the Adlers' suggestion that role bifurcation is possible, and that it is possible to draw a distinction between conversations as a foster father and those held as a researcher; I suggest my foster sons would not accept such a blatant role pretence (P. A. Adler & Adler, 1996). This dichotomy on roles also discussed by Dwyer (2009), who states, 'that the core ingredient is not insider or outsider status but an ability to be open, authentic, honest and deeply interested in the experiences of one's research participants, and committed to accurately and adequately representing their experiences' (p59). It is within this interpretation of insider research, that I have approached this study. In the next section, I address my method of data collection, narrative interviews.

4.5.2 Methods – Narrative Interviews

Fetterman provides a useful reminder that the 'research questions shape the selection of a place or program to study' (Fetterman, 1998 p32). My research question includes the phrase 'boys and young men from one foster home' and offers, what may seem an obvious location for the interviews, our family home. However, the location of an interview contains a subtext of spatial relations and meaning, which in turn, construct scales of power and positionality for participants (Elwood & Martin, 2000). Herzog also highlights a relative dearth in the methods literature on the importance of location

in interviews (Herzog, 2012). Herzog suggests researchers should explore the importance of setting, beyond the technical matters of background noise levels and convenience and to 'rethink the interview location as an element of the broader socio-political context' (Herzog 2012 p207). With this in mind, I wanted to offer the boys a choice on where to hold the interviews, as 'participants who are given a choice about where they will be interviewed may feel more empowered' (Elwood & Martin 2000 p656). For James, now living in England and father to a young child, the choice had a more practical element and a telephone interview was held. For the others, I offered a telephone interview, a location of their choosing or at our family foster home. Apart from James, all the participants chose our foster home. For those that are living with me, this may have been influenced by ease of access and for those that are no longer living with me, there may have been some nostalgic influences in their decision. However, I haven't explored the motivations for their interview location choice, other than acknowledging they had one.

The face to face interviews took place in my home study, which is a separate part of our home, not attached to the main dwelling. My home study is normally used for care review meetings or for the boys to catch up with their social workers in a space that cannot be overheard by any of the other boys or myself. It was my aim to provide a setting that made our interviews more purposeful than an *ad hoc* chat in the kitchen yet provided a familiarity that allowed the boys to feel comfortable. When I asked the boys if they were comfortable in this space, there were no negative association and they felt at ease in the study. The interviews lasted between an hour and a half to three hours. The duration of the interview was dependent on how comfortable the participant was to tell stories and a general flow provided by me. I avoided lists of questions associated with structured and semi structured interviews and used an interview guide for prompts and areas to be covered (Appendix B) (Bryman, 2014). The interview guide was informed by my reading on the topic of CEYP and gave me areas to cover, such as education, fathers, and life after living in care. I used a small selection of terms such as 'tell me about …' and 'what can you remember about …', which were designed to draw the storied aspect of their accounts. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed by a professional transcription service, with the boys' consent. I read the transcripts, whilst listening to the audio recordings, which allowed me to make any

corrections or amend any colloquialisms the boys had used, and the transcriber had misunderstood. At the start of my research design, I had originally intended to interview the boys twice, as I was unsure about how long each interview would last and whether we would be able to cover everything the boys wanted to tell you in one interview. However, as the flow of the interviews progressed and the boys seemed to ease into talking about their stories, I decided to keep to one interview each.

I now move on to talk about my methods of analysis.

4.5.2 Data Analysis

After the interviews had been transcribed, I imported the transcripts into NVivo version (11.4.3) for Mac, as internal sources and established each of the boys as a case. Following guidance developed (Nowell *et al.*, 2017), involving six phases of thematic analysis. Table 4.2 shows the six phases involved.

Phases of Thematic Analysis	Means of Establishing Trustworthiness
Phase 1: Familiarizing yourself with your data	Prolong engagement with data Triangulate different data collection modes Document theoretical and reflective thoughts Document thoughts about potential codes/themes Store raw data in well-organized archives Keep records of all data field notes, transcripts, and reflexive journals
Phase 2: Generating initial codes	Peer debriefing Researcher triangulation Reflexive journaling Use of a coding framework Audit trail of code generation Documentation of all team meeting and peer debriefings
Phase 3: Searching for themes	Researcher triangulation Diagramming to make sense of theme connections Keep detailed notes about development and hierarchies of concepts and themes
Phase 4: Reviewing themes	Researcher triangulation Themes and subthemes vetted by team members Test for referential adequacy by returning to raw data
Phase 5: Defining and naming themes	Researcher triangulation Peer debriefing Team consensus on themes Documentation of team meetings regarding themes Documentation of theme naming
Phase 6: Producing the report	Member checking Peer debriefing Describing process of coding and analysis in sufficient details Thick descriptions of context Description of the audit trail Report on reasons for theoretical, methodological, and analytical choices throughout the entire study

Table 4. 2 Nowell *et al* - Establishing Trustworthiness

Whilst I could not draw on a research team, for phases 2 to 6, I was able to share stages of my analysis with my supervisors, drawing on analysis tools such as mud lists (Appendix C) and mind maps (Appendix D) to gain some third party perspective at these stages. In addition, I drew on aspects of both Polkinghorne's *Analysis of Narrative* (AoN) and Narrative Analysis (NA) (Polkinghorne, 1995), and my conversation guide from the interviews (Appendix B), to develop four main coding (nodes) areas. Figure 4.1 shows this top level of coding, the number of cases they apply to (*n*6) and the total number of coded sections of text within (*n*1967).

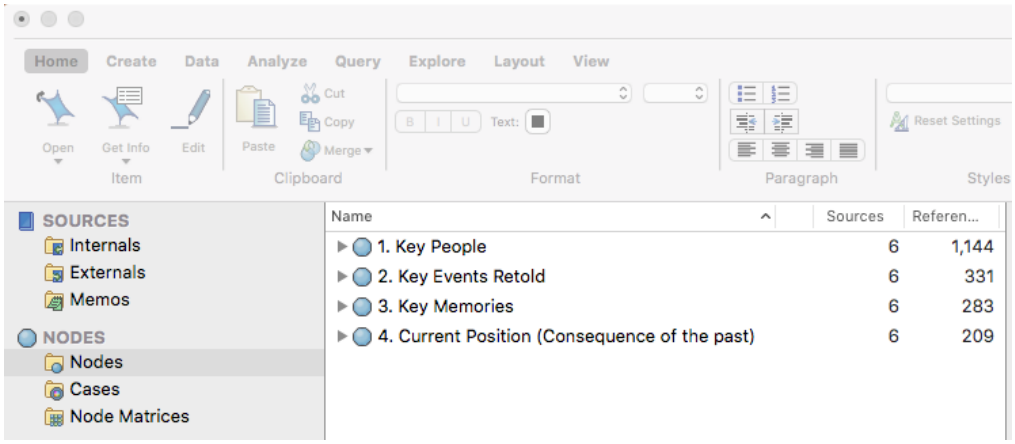


Figure 4.1 Top Level Coding Areas

As the coding process progressed, and I worked through Nowell's phases 3 to 5 (2017), each of the top levels expanded to include both deductive secondary codes, shown in figure 4.2 below, in terms of people, places and events, that I knew would be in the stories from my analysis of the narrative, as well as inductive approach using narrative analysis for secondary codes involving plots and twists, as well as unexpected themes such as humour and confidence. This iterative, yet flexible approach to thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012), was aided by my use of NVivo with such large data sets.

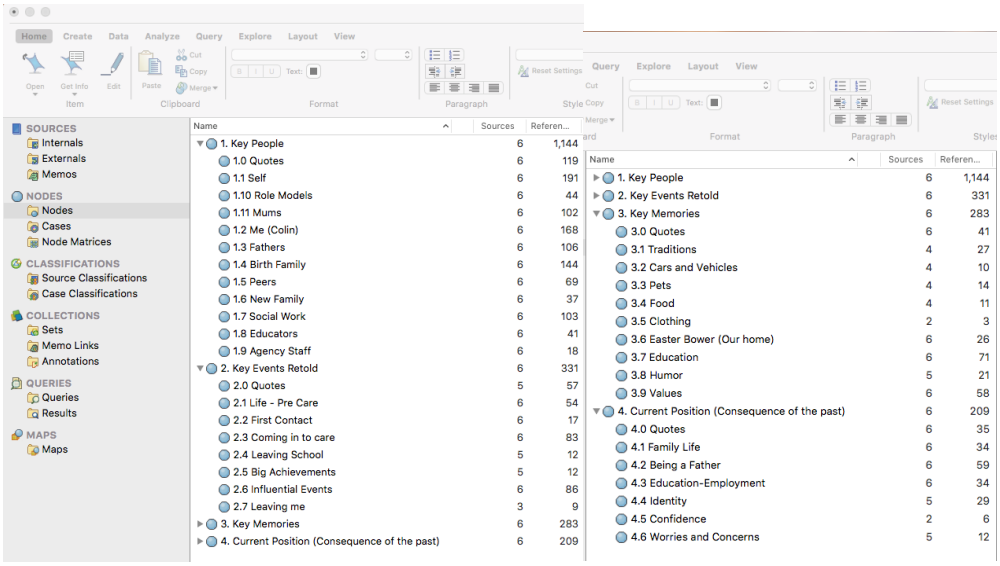


Figure 4.2 Coding at Second Level

It took three attempts to develop a coding system that allowed me to interrogate the stories from a storied perspective. Previous versions had included specific codes such as plot, character and twist, to remain faithful to core elements of narrative. However, they proved too rigid and failed to allow me to ask levels of questions from the data that I required to explore the stories. The coding structure (a full list is available in Appendix E) and the addition of case classification allowed me to ask quite sophisticated levels coding queries from the data. Case classification, with similar information as the participant table (4.1) above, allowed me to add specific background information to each participant. The figure (4.3) below shows the information at case classification level.

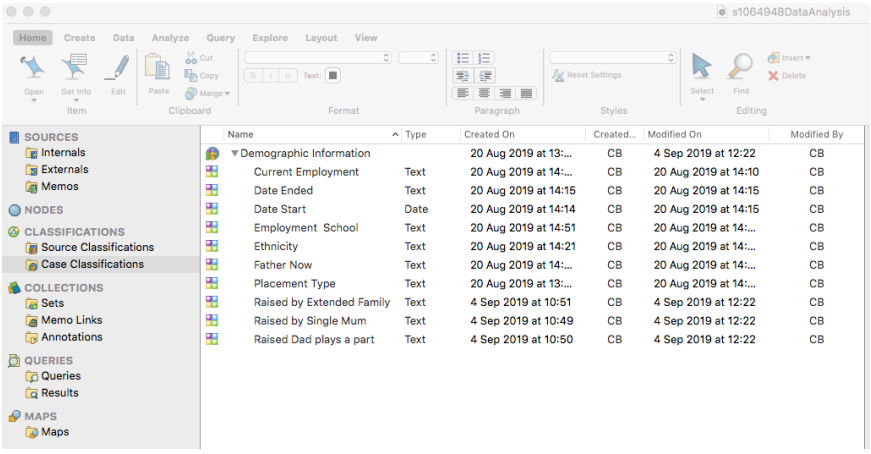


Figure 4.3 NVivo Case Classification Detail Level

Coding queries could be layered with both codes (nodes) and case classification to produce a report that contained the coded sections of data. Figure (4.4) shows an example of a coding query, coded at fathers and influential events, with a case classification of 'raised by birth father'. In this query, only two of the boys met the case classification, but there were five coded sections of data across their stories.

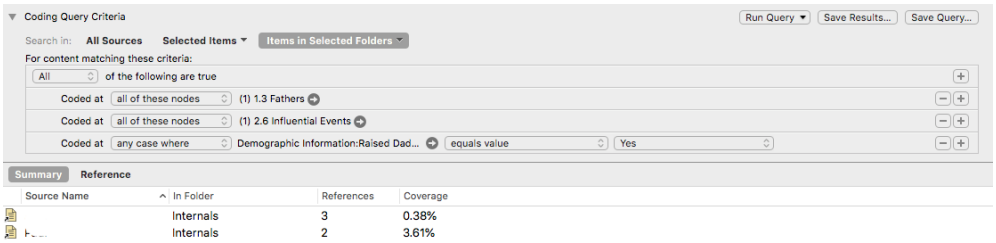


Figure 4.4 Coding Query Example

Data were almost always coded at two main codes: an individual, cohort or institution and at a key event, memory or current situation. The output from the coding queries were reports showing the name of the participant, the percentage of coverage those coded extracts represent across the total story and the coded data. Figure (4.5) shows an example of the reports, in this case, from the coding query in figure (4.4).

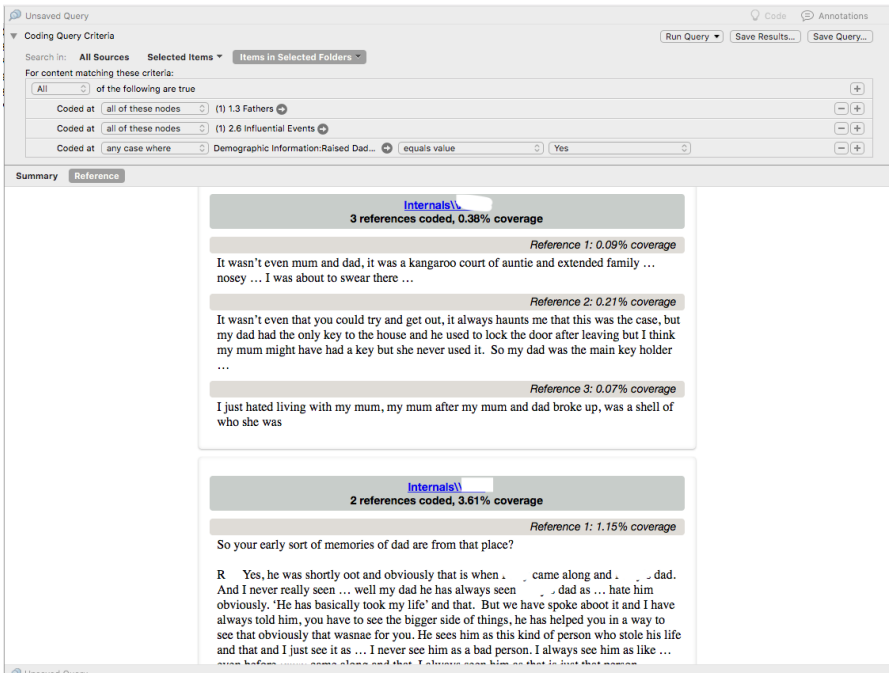


Figure 4.5 Coding Query Report Example

It is that this point of the data analysis process that I moved from software system to pen and paper and an online mapping system (bubbl.us). Following on from my comments above on NVivo and, as Bryman states in a reflection on large scale qualitive data sets, 'the sheer amount of data which I had collected … was at first quite overwhelming, but NVivo made it much more manageable' (Bryman, 2008 p454). Indeed, the large data sets in this study would have made the initial stages of analysis quite problematic without the help of software. Using NVivo also offered an analysis tool for me, from a reflexive position. As Rick and Patashnick observe in their study exploring narrative research and NVivo, 'typically, there are several facets of experience and participants' conscious or unconscious perceptions reflected in the visual narratives' (Rich & Patashnick, 2002 p252). Given my proximity to the stories being told, NVivo offered an almost clinical analysis space to code the data using criteria such as person and memory and to step back and ask for links between codes, rather than simply map them out of my perceptions. Going back and forward to the data and coding and recoding data using NVivo allowed me to develop the coding query strings mentioned above. The output to these reports shown in figure (4.5) above were printed out and the next stage of analysis began with pen and paper and a mind maps approach.

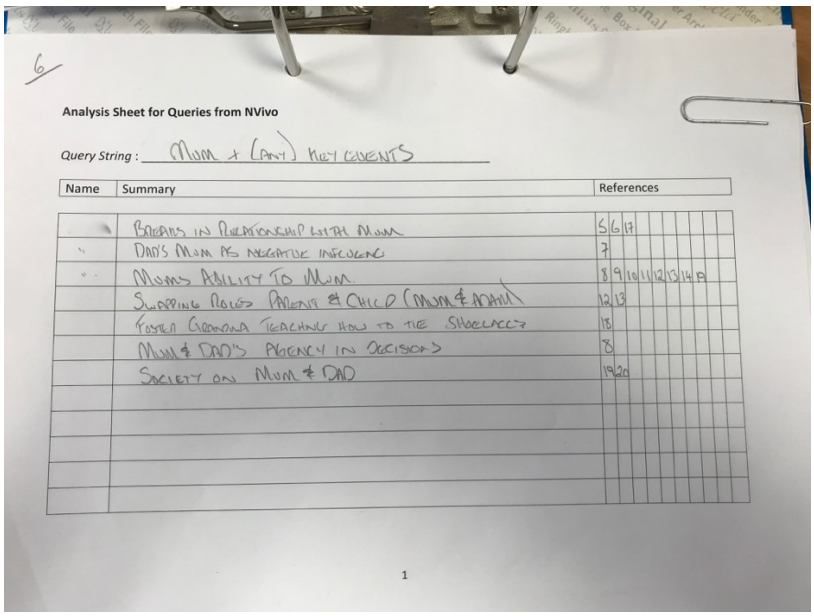


Figure 4.6 Query String Analysis and Summary (with references)

Working my way through the report and looking for themes that emerged across them allowed me to group them together in a summary. Figure (4.6) shows this first level of analysis at this stage for one of the boys. The reference numbers relate to the query report reference numbers.

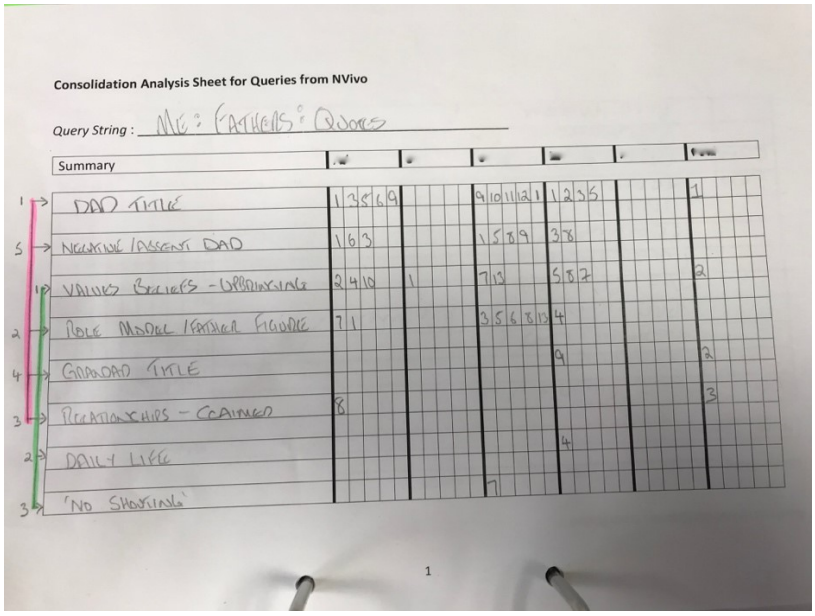
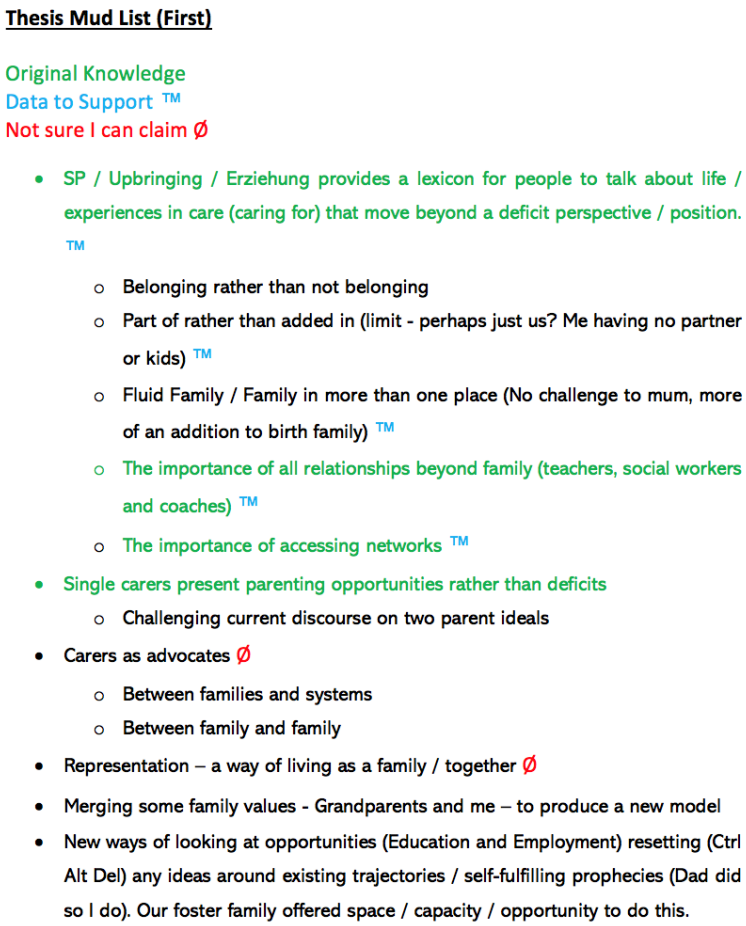


Figure 4.7 Consolidation Analysis Sheet for Queries from NVivo.

I was then able to pull the common themes from across all the boys' reports in a consolidation report. Figure (4.7) shows this for the coding query string on myself and fathers coded at the quote level. In each of the initial four coding areas, I had allocated a code to quotes. Excerpts that I felt were a powerful indicator of specific theme, were also coded at the quote level for future analysis and potential use in the thesis. From my analysis of these coding queries three key areas of interest emerged, the important role of relationships, the values and beliefs co-developed through these relationships and the role of everyday life experiences in the development of these relationships. By revisiting the literature in this area and the themes that emerged, the foundations were laid for my three findings chapters.

Moving from the findings chapters to the discussion and contribution of knowledge involved further analysis, with a 'mud list': an exhaustive list of everything I'd learned so far in the process of analysis (Evans, Gruba, & Zobel, 2014). Figure 4.8 shows an excerpt from this list and a system I developed to suggest where an item on the list

was a new contribution to knowledge, with data to back this up and where I wasn't sure I could claim this as original knowledge. The full mud list is available in Appendix C.



Thesis Mud List (First)

Original Knowledge
Data to Support ™
Not sure I can claim Ø

- SP / Upbringing / Erziehung provides a lexicon for people to talk about life / experiences in care (caring for) that move beyond a deficit perspective / position. ™
  - Belonging rather than not belonging
  - Part of rather than added in (limit - perhaps just us? Me having no partner or kids) ™
  - Fluid Family / Family in more than one place (No challenge to mum, more of an addition to birth family) ™
  - The importance of all relationships beyond family (teachers, social workers and coaches) ™
  - The importance of accessing networks ™
- Single carers present parenting opportunities rather than deficits
  - Challenging current discourse on two parent ideals
- Carers as advocates Ø
  - Between families and systems
  - Between family and family
- Representation – a way of living as a family / together Ø
- Merging some family values - Grandparents and me – to produce a new model
- New ways of looking at opportunities (Education and Employment) resetting (Ctrl Alt Del) any ideas around existing trajectories / self-fulfilling prophecies (Dad did so I do). Our foster family offered space / capacity / opportunity to do this.

Figure 4.8 Mud List Excerpt

From my mud list of ideas, I moved on to what Evans *et al* refer to as spider diagram, which is a form of mind map (Evans *et al.*, 2014). Mind maps had been an integral part of my planning and analysis, and I used an online system Bubbl.us to plan out the links between ideas and the relationships ships with the existing literature. Figure 4.9 shows one of the mind maps generated from the above mud list. A selection of mind maps from this study is available in (Appendix D).

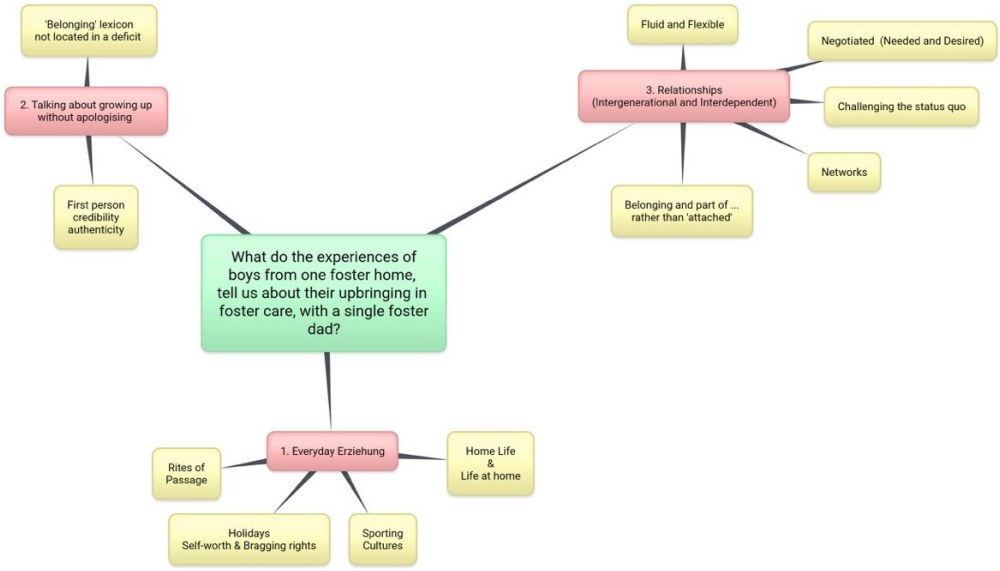


Figure 4.9 Mud List Mind Map

At the start of this section I set out my aims to develop rigor and trustworthiness in my analysis of the data (Nowell *et al.*, 2017). Nowell et al, also encourage researchers to be self-critical, as studies that strives for rigor and trustworthiness, 'reflexivity is central to the audit trail' (Nowell *et al.*, 2017 p3). As part of this study's audit trail, I now move on to give a detailed account of my reflexive approaches.

4.6 Reflexivity

Within section 4.3 and my discussion on the participants, I drew on Ellis' work to establish the value of co-constructed narratives between my foster sons and myself. Here, I return to Ellis in order to develop the foundations on which I will give an account of my reflexive approach to this study:

> Co-constructed narratives are stories jointly constructed by relational partners about epiphanies in their lives. This approach offers a way for participants to actively construct a version of a relational event that provides insight, understanding, and an in-depth and complex reflection on what occurred. (Ellis, 2008 p84)

The above extract from Ellis provides some scaffolding for my discussion on my position as both foster father and researcher. Ellis goes on to explain the advantages of such an approach is that it allows participants and researchers 'in the process of 'doing' their relationships, to turn fragmented, vague or disjointed events into intelligible coherent accounts' (Ellis, 2008 p84). I have provided the foundations of my reflexive approach in Chapter 1, with an account of my journey to becoming a foster father and my motivations and decisions made. Here, I move on to define and discuss reflexivity, drawing on methodological literature, and link the importance of a reflexive position in an ethical approach to this study; and in doing so contribute to the rigour and trustworthiness of my methodology.

At the start of my research, I faced challenges from my University's Ethics Committee, on my relationship with the participants and their perceived vulnerability of them, as looked after and accommodated young people. It was suggested that a less problematic study could look at the experiences of young people, who haven't lived with me. Whilst this was possible, and to some extent would provide a useful and interesting study, it ignored the opportunity to explore this topic as an insider in a fostering context. I share Dwyer's view in that 'I do not think being an insider makes me a better or worse researcher; it just makes me a different type of researcher' (Dwyer, 2009 p56). In terms of vulnerability, I draw on the work of Wilson and Neville 'often vulnerable populations are exposed to research that is driven by dominant epistemologies, research methodologies, and socio-lenses that can exacerbate their vulnerability, negating their socio-cultural reality' (Wilson & Neville, 2009 p69). In defence of my study, I argued that any potential risks to the participants are far outweighed by the value and importance of hearing their views on upbringing. After several iterations, ethical consent for the study was granted at level 3. A core element within the ethical consent granted, was my assurances on a reflexive approach to the study. I now go on to provide a working definition of reflexivity and my introspective approach to this thesis.

Margaret Archer cites William James when describing attempts at introspective analysis as 'turning up the gas quickly enough to see how the darkness looks' (James, 1890 p243 in Archer, 2010 p5). This metaphor encompasses the perceived frustration

that can surround, not only the processes of reflexivity, but also a singular definition shared and understood by researchers. I also feel it is important to clarify my use of the term reflexivity over that of reflection. For the purposes of this study, I would like to align my views with that of Taylor and White, who differentiate *reflection*, as a process of analysis taking place at the time of practice or 'thinking on your feet' that researchers and practitioners must carry out as part of their working environment; from *reflexivity*, which includes all the elements of reflection but extends the process and 'problematizes issues that reflection takes for granted' (Taylor & White, 2000 p198). For example, reflection accepts propositional and process knowledge at face value, this could mean there is an assumption that reflection allows a researcher to apply theoretical practices in the process of research, whereas reflexivity requires us to interrogate these assumptions. I agree with the view of reflexivity as a 'continuous and fundamental part of the research process' (Siltanen, Willis, & Scobie, 2008 p47). From the outset and development of my research question, through the ethical challenges presented by the population and sample; the data gathering, analysis and reporting in this thesis, I have been guided by a reflexive practice and acknowledged my role, as both foster father and researcher. Part of my aims in developing a co-constructed narrative with the boys, was an acknowledgement of how and why the boys gave the account they did. To do this, I draw on the work of Andrea Doucet, who borrows a provocative metaphor from Anne Michael's novel *Fugitive Pieces* when describing three gossamer walls (Doucet, 2007 p74). I was drawn to this analysis on the fragility of claims made in qualitative research and the translucency, opaqueness or lack of any absolute clear view we have when trying to 'know' our research participants or indeed ourselves. The three walls in Doucet's metaphor refer to sets of relationships that exist during our research process. The first is the internalised relationship with myself, as both foster father and researcher, and what Moser would describe as 'our personalities rather than our positionalities' (Moser, 2008 p383), and includes the traditional social categories of age, gender, ethnicity and class. The first gossamer wall includes events and life experiences that have shaped our views and beliefs and therefore our perceptions and judgements. The second gossamer wall represents the relationship between the researcher and the participant. Central to my University's Ethics Committee challenges, were issues on coercion, bias and neutrality, all of which are

negotiated through this second gossamer wall. I carried out research with young people who are part of my daily life; this could be interpreted through, what Tim May describes as endogenous reflexivity (May & Williams, 1998 p157) and describes how 'interpretations and actions within the life world contribute to the constitution of social reality', which ' relates to the knowledge we have of our immediate and social milieu' (ibid). The third gossamer wall is the relationship between participants, researchers and our audiences. Participants may recognise that after telling their story, the narrative 'becomes independent of its author and exits on its own in the world' (Martin 1998 p7 in Etherington, 2007 p614). An awareness of who might be listening, both now and in the future, can impact on a participant's contribution to their story. As part of my reflexive and ethical approach to this study, I made the boys aware of who could read the thesis, that I may publish from the thesis and share my findings in public formats, such as conferences. This allowed them to decide on the level of anonymity they wished, and to what extent they wished to provide detail in their accounts.

Central to my reflexive approach is a defensible account on my use of first-person writing. Traditionally, papers written in the first person have proved more problematic for authors. Davies explains that authors feel compelled to provide an intellectual account of their research, which can be published in journals and the use of the word 'I' can limit credibility in qualitative research and acceptance by journals (Davies, 2012 p4). This dilemma, faced by qualitative researchers and participants, encapsulates what Tim May refers to as the 'epistemology of reception' (May, 1998 p23), which raises critical questions about 'how and under what circumstances social scientific knowledge is received, evaluated, and acted upon and under what circumstances' (May, 1998). In order to expand my discussion on the use of a first-person style, I have drawn on Mead's theory of self (Mead, 1934). The term 'self' is used throughout reflexive literature and I would like to establish a reference for its use and ultimately a justification for writing in a first-person style. I subscribe to Herbert Meads 'Theory of the self' which utilises Cooley's terms 'looking glass', 'I' and 'Me'. The term 'I' refers to the central self that is active and spontaneous, the authentic part of the self. The 'Me' is how others see us, the looking glass me. Mead uses the term looking glass, which in a contemporary context could be described as a mirror, as a metaphor for how others see us. Mead is not suggesting that there is any metaphysical

question of how a person can be both ‘Me’ and ‘I’ but asks us to consider the significance that both parts of the ‘self’ at play in any social interaction. I consider Mead’s theory of self as the reflexive foundation that holds the first of Doucet’s gossamer walls mentioned above and the internalized relationship with myself as researcher and foster father.

Reflexivity helps me address my position in this study, and to be mindful of the role I have played in the production of co-constructed narratives. I acknowledge and embrace my role and align my defence with fellow researchers, who have come to advocate the role of researcher voice and emotion in qualitive research. Mauthner describes the pressures to achieve a positivist approach in qualitative research as an expectation to ‘render herself, her voice and her influence invisible in her research’ (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003 p420). I would argue that this is impossible in qualitative research. As well as the personal and academic biographies we bring to our study, there are the multiple emotions entangled in our lives. Bondi and Smith asks us to be mindful of the part emotions play in gathering and analysing data and suggest that even in quantitative research, the idea that emotions are ‘antithetical to, and have no place in scientific research is inappropriate’ (Bondi & Smith, 2005 p233).

In this section of the chapter, I have established a defence and definition from the literature on reflexivity, as an approach in qualitative research. I have drawn heavily on the work of Andrea Doucet and the gossamer wall metaphor, which entirely encapsulates my view of the fragility in knowing both others and ourselves, and the part that relational reflexivity plays in our research. As a researcher, I would describe reflexivity in qualitative research as a continuous process of awareness and questioning of my values, beliefs, emotions and potential impact on participants, data and writing. The skill in my reflexive approach to this research is distilling the impact of reflexivity into a proportion that does not overpower the research in autobiographical noise or a cathartic polemic. Any audience or reader must have enough information to understand the impact of the researcher on the study but not at the expense of the research question. This line of discussion leads us to strive for trustworthiness, covered in more detail in section (4.7). I now move on to discuss the

ethical consideration required for this study and tease out the differences between procedural and practice ethics (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004).

4.7 Ethical Considerations

Negotiating the ethical issues raised by this study was challenging. Indeed, given the uniqueness of the research setting, population and researcher, there were multiple iterations of the application as the School of Education ethics committee sought reassurance that the research took account of what they assumed to be the vulnerability of the participants. In order to provide reassurance and contribute to my discussion on rigor and trustworthiness below, I draw on the different dimensions of what Guillemin and Gillman (2004) describe as 'procedural ethics and ethics in practice' (p262). The research design, including the ethics board application process are parts of the procedural ethics involved with research. They are a key element in any research design. Practice ethics refers to the everyday ethical issues that arise in the doing of the research. It requires a high level of reflexivity on the part of the researcher, as Guillemin and Gillman state 'reflexivity does not prescribe specific types of responses to research situations, it is a sensitising notion that can enable ethical practice to occur in the complexity and richness of social science' (p278). As shown above, reflexivity was a core element in my research methodology.

Initial consent to interview was sought from the placing local authority to approach all the boys currently in care with me and under a supervision order. The local authority has a set questionnaire for research and a completed copy of this is available in (Appendix F). Local authority consent to proceed was granted by email on the 22nd December 2015. The Local authority holds the parental rights for these young people. Individual consent was sought and gained from all participants and given in writing as well as verbally at the point of recording the interview. A copy of the information sheet and consent form is available in (Appendix G). Permission was given by all to use the data for the thesis and any future publications or presentations. A reader may rightfully question the right to not participant in this study, given the relationship between the boys and myself. The thesis was part of our family life and talked about openly at dinner time and during various stages of the PhD process, such as the progression board. The boys were aware that some were taking part and others were not, for a

range of reasons, including availability and that some couldn't be contacted. A good example of the open culture and discussion around participation, and the right to withdraw was Sam, my youngest foster son at the time of the interviews. Specific consent was gained from the Local Authority, as Sam was the only participant under the age of 18. However, as the time of the interviews arrived, Sam decided he did not want to take part and withdrew from the study. Whilst this was difficult for me as the researcher, hoping to add as wide a range of experiences to the study as possible, we agreed that it was perfectly ok for him not to take part. I return to Sam's decision not to take part in section 8.6 and implications for research, as time has progressed, we approach the end of the PhD process and he has grown older, he has mentioned some regrets at not participating.

I would like to highlight a growing discourse around institutional ethics and research with children and young people, particularly those in what can be perceived as vulnerable groups:

> I argue that current ethical guidelines and protocols within universities and linked institutions are problematic because they have not evolved from a child centric perspective nor (usually) from a social sciences framework (Skelton, 2008 p23).

Skelton highlights a tension present in current research discourse, between ethics, competence and participation, where institutional ethical frameworks can obstruct participation and voice for children and young people (2008). Skelton's argument aligns with Hurst's views on restrictive views of vulnerability, and where defining a working understanding of vulnerability raises practical problems around informed consent (Hurst, 2008). 'the problem of requirements for ancillary care, which has proved particularly thorny in research ethics, is an example' (Hurst, 2008 p201); Hurst calls for a clearer definition of vulnerability that addresses the differences between what made someone vulnerable and the potential for doing further wrong or harm in this area (Hurst, 2008). Acknowledging both Skelton and Hurst's studies moves us towards addressing issues around informed consent and *in loco parentis* (Piper & Sikes, 2010), as discussed in section (3.2.3). This line of argument also supports my issues with an automatic identification, as vulnerable, for all care experienced young

people, regardless of capacity, capability or agency. Whilst local authorities, research institutes, researchers and participants should ensure there is no potential for harm; my overarching methodological argument in this thesis, for aspects of autonomy and decision around participation, are summed up by Parsons *et al*'s study:

> … the increasing scrutiny of research by RECs within universities has raised particular concerns regarding the potential exclusion of children and young people from research ... Specifically, children and young people are argued to be vulnerable participants (Parsons *et al.*, 2015 p712)

This line of discussion on the tensions within procedural ethics and participation also allows me to talk about the practice ethics (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004), involved in this study with my foster sons. Whilst procedural ethics can be thought of as a preparation process to carry out an ethical study, 'ethics in practice', can be thought of as the day to day process of live research (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004 p264). For example, Sam, my youngest foster son at the time of study had originally wanted to take part, perhaps in wanting to follow his foster brothers, but then changed his mind at the point of interviews. Procedural consent had been given by the local authority to include Sam, but respecting his decision not to take part, as he didn't want to talk about his mother, was part of practice ethics. This form of ethics also applies to disclosure during interviews and on more than one occasion the boys openly talked about difficult topics in their lives; and whilst I had made them aware of my duty to report new disclosures of harm and abuse to the social work department, there was a practical aspect to managing these difficult sections in their stories. Etherington also mentions the importance of reflexive approaches in studies involving stories as relational accounts. 'My interest in these issues is embedded in my fascination with stories as a form of knowledge creation and inquiry. Stories are produced and created within social relationships and between storytellers and their audiences.' (Etherington, 2007 p600). Here, I have teased out the important relationship between procedural and practice ethics and reflexivity in carrying out an ethical study with my sons:

> All parties are potentially vulnerable when undertaking ethical reflexive research that requires us to come from behind the protective barriers of objectivity and invite others to join with us in our exploration of being a researcher and remaining human. (Etherington, 2007 p615).

Etherington closes her article Ethical Research in Reflexive Relationships, with the above statement. This excerpt is of interest for two reasons. Firstly, and in addition to my discussions on vulnerability above, I am mindful that in the process of this study, I have had to examine the impact of the study for me as a foster father and my efforts to privilege this role over that of a PhD candidate. Secondly, the excerpt is a call to arms and for me to step beyond a protective barrier of objectivity to embrace the subjective nature of this study and its value in delivering a unique contribution to this field. In addition to my reflexive account above, I now address the rigour and trustworthiness of my study.

4.8 Rigour and Trustworthiness

I have taken an interpretivist approach to generating qualitative data for this study. Rather than addressing challenges on reliability, validity, objectivity and generalisability, which are appropriate for more positivist research, I draw on Guba's constructs of dependability, credibility, conformability and transferability (Guba, 1981; Shenton, 2004), in order to address trustworthiness. In section 4.5.2 above, I provided an auditable decision trail of my analysis process, drawing on Nowell *et al's* six phases of analysis in meeting trustworthiness criteria (2017), in order to account for this study's dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1989). In this section I discuss three further concepts, credibility, confirmability and transferability, within the context of this study (Lincoln & Guba, 1989).

4.8.1 Credibility

Given the relationship between the participants and myself, I felt it was particularly important to address this aspect of the study's rigour and trustworthiness. Lincoln and Guba provide a list of possible mechanism to address this aspect of their evaluative criteria (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This list includes persistent observation, data and researcher triangulation and prolonged engagement (1985). Given the co-constructed narrative focus in this study, more conventional triangulation was not an appropriate approach, as the boys do not keep diaries and accessing social media would be ethically problematic and perhaps offer little insights to the stories in our family. There

are, to some extent, aspects of prolonged engagement, as the boys and I lived with each other, but this may raise further questions on trustworthiness, such as taken-for granted aspects of people living in one house, rather than provide a sense of credibility. Lincoln and Guba also suggest peer debriefing, as a method of external checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985); and Shenton, drawing on Lincoln and Guba, suggest 'frequent debriefing sessions between the researcher and his or her superiors' (Shenton, 2004 p67). Whilst not peer debrief, my thesis supervisors have provided an operationalised process of checking my interpretations of the data and questioning my analysis throughout the study process. As Shelton says, 'others who are responsible for the work in a more supervisory capacity may draw attention to flaws in the proposed course of action.' (2004, p67). I would like to add, that despite my proximity to the data, there were several themes to emerge from the data that I hadn't expected to find. I discuss the impact of these findings' epiphanies throughout both the findings and discussion chapters, as an added source of credibility.

4.8.2 Confirmability

In section 4.6, I gave an account of my reflexive approach to this study. Lincoln and Guba argue that confirmability in a research context is addressed by a researcher openly addressing the potential impact of their role as researcher on the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I have argued for an acknowledgement of the importance of co-constructed narratives, within the context of this study, and aim to provide visibility of my role in this in both my discussion of an insider researcher 4.5.1 and my specific use of first person writing in this study and my argument for embracing this within a reflexive approach to this study (Davies, 2012; May, 1998; Mead, 1934). In doing so, I believe I have met the evaluative criteria established for confirmability by Lincoln and Guba (1985).

4.8.3 Transferability

In this study I have focused on the importance of relationships, for both foster children and adults. Given my discussion on relationships and individual boys' story, I make no claims on the generalisability of the findings in this study to other children in foster

care. Here, I draw on (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) to suggest it will be possible for the reader to explore the transferability of the findings in various care contexts, care relationship and professions. Indeed, it is my aim to provide thick descriptions of my findings in the discussion Chapter 8, in order for the reader to judge whether there is transferability to their own site (Nowell *et al.*, 2017), such as other foster settings, residential child care, where I argue for the importance of the everyday aspects of life over psychologised perspectives.

4.9 Concluding Remarks

The line of argument running throughout this chapter has been a defence and justification for my approach to this study. From the development of the research question and addressing the challenges presented by those who would pursue more objective forms of knowledge generation; to my focus on ethical and reflexive approaches to this study, this chapter has taken a step by step review of the approaches taken. Given the importance of visibility in qualitative studies (Snape & Spencer, 2003) and the need to develop rigor and trustworthiness (Nowell *et al.*, 2017; Shenton, 2004), I have provided an open account of the process involved at each stage. I now move on to the first of my finding's chapters and my account of the data that relates to relationships.

Chapter 5 - Relationships – Flexible, Negotiated and Pedagogic

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I provide an account of the boys' perspectives on relationships. At the heart of *Upbringing* are reciprocal relationships that are shaped and supported by the passing on of values and beliefs through everyday experiences (Smith, 2013). My analysis adds to a discourse on what it means to be brought up in foster care, and the people and relationships that shape this form of upbringing. I present the findings on the nuanced, fluid, and flexible way my foster sons negotiate relationships and explore these from three interconnected perspectives. In the first section (5.2) I present the findings on the boys' perspectives of me as their foster father, and to what extent they feel they can confer on me the title of 'dad' or not. Next, in section (5.3) I report the findings on the boys' perceptions of birth family relationships, and how these features in their lives, whilst living away from their birth families and in foster care. The final analysis section in this Chapter (5.4), explores the relationships with professionals in the boys' lives. Foster families are shaped and overseen by social work systems and public processes, such as annual reviews and hearings, and are supported by a range of agencies and professionals including social workers and teachers.

Central to this study's research question is the influence of pedagogic intergenerational relationships on the experiences of the boys being raised in our foster family. This chapter provides a structured perspective on these relationships, both birth and foster relationships, which allows me to develop my line of argument on upbringing through the passing on of values and beliefs. I close this chapter with section (5.5) and a recap of the key perspectives, and how these may influence the discussion in Chapter 8 and the original contributions in section 8.5. To begin with, I explore the data that relates to our relationship as foster son and foster father.

5.2 The boys' perceptions of me as their foster father

The often-positive nature of the boys' comments about me as a foster father, do of course need to be treated with some caution, as they may have felt more comfortable in highlighting fewer positive memories with another interviewer. However, this can

also be counterbalanced by an openness on both positive and negatives that could only be discussed within an insider epistemology, and would be difficult for an outsider to access. This section of the chapter has been subdivided into two sections: the use of language and the title 'dad' (5.2.1), and a discussion on role models in their lives (5.2.2). I have taken this rational for my structure, as these were the emerging themes in the data analysis.

5.2.1 Dad in everything but title

In this section, I report my analysis of the data around the boys' perceptions of our relationship, as foster father and upbringer. I explore the part the title 'dad' plays in the stories of the boys, as they speak about my relationship with them, and their relationships with their birth fathers in comparison. There were some interesting subtexts in play in these perceptions from the boys' stories. In places, there was a tension present between what the boys perceived or expected from the role of a father, filtered through their experiences with their actual fathers, present, distant or absent. The boys' perceptions moved deftly and fluidly between ideals of what fathers should be, shaped by the media or peers, to unverified versions of absent fathers that might be shaped by their Mother's narratives, as well as negative actual experiences of fathers in a range of episodes in their lives. With the exception of Oliver, birth fathers had no positive associations for the boys in their reflections. At a fundamental level, comparison of Father and myself, often began in semantics and the title of 'dad', when asked about father figures in their lives:

> … you are not dad. You are Colin, and that means much more to me than the dad thing… I think for me it doesn't matter what word is used as in father or dad or any of those different words, they all mean the same thing to me … this person who produced me and wasn't really that big a part of my life [Aaron]

> To me you were Colin. Do you know what I mean? It is kind of weird … I would'nae call you my dad, even though you were like my dad… you were the closest thing I did have to a dad, but you weren't … he is … my actual dad, I wouldn't even call him dad. It is a difficult one [Christian]

> I wouldn't say I would call you dad, but a big part of me would say you are my dad. I have even said it to loads of people, that I have got two dads. I don't think I would ever call you dad, you would always be Colin to me. [Oliver]

When directly challenged, navigating other people's perceptions of language, were also present in this section of the data, and stories of people picking up the boys' use of Colin, rather than 'dad':

> … there was only one person that cottoned on very early … we were going out and I had shouted 'see you later Colin' and he twigged there and then something wasn't right. And he asked me on the way up the driveway 'why did you just call your dad Colin?' and when you are kind of put into that position, I had to tell him. I am not going to lie to his face, so I told him the truth … surprisingly he was kind of 'uh', kind of stunned, didn't know what to say. [Declan]

For the boys above, all of whom were in full time foster care with me, there are levels of complications in their comparisons between birth father and myself. They are attempting to distance me from a negative relationship in their life, and at the same time struggling to accord me with what they perceive, as the relational importance and significance of the title dad. Oliver, who had a more complex relationship to account for, as his absent birth father had come back into his life recently, was keen to avoid any notions of replacement, and to develop a concept of addition, with two dads.

There was an interesting theme to emerge on the boys' perspective on a lack of conflict between my role as a single male foster father and the important role still held by the boys' mother. Within the boys' stories, their mother often presents me as a model of fatherhood to the boys. Christian talks about his Mother's upset at him coming in to foster care, but this is tinged with some acknowledgement on the potential of a possible father figure, or role model, coming into his life:

> She was pretty upset, but I think she kind of knew that that was what was best for me. She didn't really want to admit that. I don't think she wanted to admit that it was best for me … I don't think any mother wants to admit it is best for their son to live with someone else other than themselves … but you got on well with my Mum, aye … for me, it was someone in my life that hadn't been there before. Do you know what I mean? They (Dad) were never there in the first place … so it was a bit better for myself, to be honest. [Christian]

The title of ‘dad’ seemed to be less complex for the boys when discussing me with other people, it was less complicated to simply let the identity be assumed by the others. When it occasionally came into question, ‘ask your dad?’ or ‘you look like your dad’, this shifted the identity issue from assumed to a need to provide or establish an identity of someone in care. Across all six boys, there were no adverse memories of this second complexity, but it did present some complications for the next generation. In the extract that follows, Declan talks about how he accounts for me to his son Luke:

> There is no way I can sit down with a five-year-old and explain ‘I grew up in care …’…. he calls you … ‘is that grandad, can I speak to grandad’… He knows who you are, and he knows that you are my dad, and Luke is quite good, if I trust someone … then Luke tends to trust them. [Declan]

For the four boys that are now fathers, managing accounts of their life history in care, and my role in their life, presented some interesting challenges, when talking to their sons. In a story recalled with some humour, James, who is black, recalled his way of explaining who his foster parents were, to his son Chris:

> I call them Lucy and David to him and I remember when he first asked ‘who is that?’ or whatever, I said it is my Mother and Father… he is clearly not old enough to make the link that they are both white and I am black … [James]

Chris knows me as a friend of his Father, and in this instance, respite offered an easy, manageable gap that didn’t need to be complicated by any discussion of care or the title ‘dad’. There is a broader temporal question, unanswered by the data on how the boys, who are now fathers themselves, navigate their past care life identities, with the next generation. When, and if, that time arrives, my title as Colin, Father or Grandfather may be renegotiated again.

As their foster father, I was already aware of the boys’ fluid and skilful ability in navigating the use of the word ‘dad’ in situations inside and outside our relationship. I hadn’t realised this ability also presented a conflict of emotion in what they perceived as the bond accorded by the title dad, with negative associations with the current holder of the title, or the absence of a role model. At times, and within earshot of others, it

was less complicated to not challenge the use of ‘dad’, as this opened questions on a life in care, that led to more complications for the boys. In summary, the title ‘dad’ appeared to be more complicated for the boys when reflecting on its use during our interviews, than during the daily life and dealing with others. Perhaps this was due to the nature of our conversation and talking with me, but there are also significant sections of the data coded at ‘self’ where the boys are openly reflecting on their use of the title dad, our relationship and thoughts about their birth fathers. In my interview notes, I’ve recorded that the boys seemed comfortable to talk with me about dads, fathers and the language around them, I’ve also noted that it would have been interesting to see how they would have felt when talking to someone outside of our relationship, in a shift from insider to outsider researcher. A recommendation I have made in section (8.6.2). I now move on to discuss role models, as perceived by the boys.

5.2.2 Role Models

In the previous section, I discussed the absence of a father role model for some of the boys. In this section, I tease out the data that cover not only fathers, missing or otherwise, but also the wide range of people across a range of generations, professions and roles, that have influenced the boys’ perceptions of who they look to as a role model. I discuss the boys’ perception of values and beliefs in Chapter 6 and how these are shaped or influenced by key individuals in their lives. Here, I report my analysis of the data around role models in the following themes that emerged: myself as a father figure, birth family as parenting models, absent role models and finally, role models that specifically influence education and employment.

To begin with, and in addition to my analysis in section (5.2.1) on the use of the title ‘dad’, I provide an analysis of the data around father figures for the boys:

> When I say ‘a Colin’ I mean someone who is meant to be … what society thinks of a father is like a role model, meant to be positive, meant to push you, meant to engage you … of course I think you fill in a lot of what society believes a mother does as well. [Aaron]

Aaron's extract contains two interesting dimensions that were also common across all six stories. Firstly, that there are ideals of dads, as someone who invests in you and takes the time to be with you. Secondly, for Barry, Christian, Oliver and James, who were raised by single Mothers, my role as foster father is blended with what these boys perceived as their mother's role, as primary carer.

For the respite boys, Barry and James, there was an interesting divergence in their experiences and therefor comparisons with my father figure role. For Barry, who was living with Mother, and whose Father was not part of his life, my role according to his version of Mother's account, was that of positive male role model, rather than replacement dad. Mother's endorsement was important to Barry, as perceived that she wanted him to have positive role models in his life, particularly, as he was now a Father himself:

> … she always says, talks about you, and she always says if you see Colin tell him I'm asking for him, even though, and she's always said, out of everyone we've ever had in our life and like including people in our own family, male role models, she always said 'you are the only one we really had', as a male role model … and then there's my grandad, he is not really a role model for anyone [Barry]

For James, who lived with his full-time foster parents Lucy and David, and came to me during holidays, he saw his foster father David as Father and me as an additional male role model:

> So I called him David but whenever I talk about Lucy and David, I call them Mum and dad. … because I am not going to say … to some guy that I don't know, my foster Mother and Father, or Lucy and David, cause 'who is Lucy and David' so … I see them as my Mum and Dad, and I describe them as Mum and Dad, but I always call them by their names … it is something that is interesting. I do pick up values from people like David and yourself and I can see that in the way I treat Chris (son). Like subliminally it is like I am looking for someone to … a role model, always. I am always looking at the next person to be my role model and absorb from and learn from. [James]

In addition to the day to day living tasks, discussed in Chapter 7, were reflections on emotional support and time spent talking about them and their worries, which they

associated with a relationship with Mother. For example, Oliver seemed conflicted in his reflections on our discussions about difficult topics. The data suggest that he saw my role as a safe place between birth parent and the social work system in which he was accommodated:

> … I'd never talk to my dad, when he was around, about the hard stuff, ken. I cannae put it in to words, but you're not dad, if you know what I mean, but I can talk to you about dad stuff … about things that are going on ... and my Mum was dealing with other stuff, like, so no joy there. [Oliver]

There is insufficient capacity in this study to fully discuss gender stereotypes and roles in detail. However, for the purposes of focus, the data in this section of the analysis adds to a developing theme around my role as a single male carer and a lack of competition or conflict with their Mothers, mentioned in the previous section. For the boys, who had been raised by single Mothers, there was an interesting reflection on the change from single Mother to single foster father:

> So to go from one to the other … it was a bit strange. Because obviously I never had my dad when I was younger. So it was a wee bit of a weird one for myself … I had a lot of questions and had a lot of anxiety about my dad and then obviously for someone else to come in and take over that role, it was a bit of a … you know what I mean? It was like 'whoa, what is going on?'. [Christian]

Christian's comments represent a feeling of uncertainty in his story, on a role that wasn't part of his life so far and to some extent, questions around the need for one, and an anxiety about more of the same type of fathering. For Aaron and Oliver, whose birth fathers were part of their lives in some way growing up, comparisons on father role models were more accessible and seemed to highlight what they regarded was missing for them as sons. In the following extract from Aaron, he is comparing his Father to what he knows of the other boys in our family, and a deficit version of his relationship with his birth father, compared to him and I:

> They have very negative input from their dads or … push them down the wrong path … whereas my dad definition comes very close to Sam's [Foster Brother] in that we didn't really have him. I think dad for me is almost a lack of caring, and a lack of attention and a lack of belonging and being there. I had another

> father figure in life … that was completely different construction which … it was closer to a father than to a Colin. But there was, in its own twisted way, caring there. And a kind of underlying … thoughtful and that sort of stuff, but with all the other stuff underpinning that, made it quite difficult to see dad, dad… male role models, [Aaron]

Aaron's reflection has complex layers of father and son relationships. He summarises the other boys as having father figures that actively pursue the wrong path for their sons. Whereas, he likens his experiences to Sam, a foster son that didn't participate in the study, and draws comparisons between Sam's absent father with his father, as one that wasn't there emotionally. Aaron then defines this negative association in the term 'dad' and contrasts this with his ideals of a male role model and our relationship. Both the respite boys, Barry and James, reflected a more positive outlook on the role of a father figure in establishing rules and identifying aims:

> I know there was obviously always rules but don't think you're ever strict, well we never really, from what I remember, we never really pushed any sort of boundaries with you, because you are quite fair in what you said anyway, there was never any sort of strict rules, it was always, if you want something to eat, go and help yourself, anything that is fair. [Barry]

> [Story about my sports car] … reminded me of 'this is what I am working towards, this is what I am doing it for' or whatever … and when it came round to Uni time, I had a … I had a brochure, I found a brochure in the career's service saying 'University of Dyson …' cause you had advised me that was the best university, a good one to go to. [James]

Two additional interesting themes are mentioned in the excerpts from Barry and James. Firstly, the important part that boundaries and rules played in life in our home, and comparisons with rules and ways of dealing with each other at home with their birth family. For example, Christian makes several references to a lack of shouting on my part, compared to his Mother's dealing with him:

> I never felt like, I felt like if I got into trouble about something it was always for a good reason, and you were never like … I don't think you ever shouted at me, I think you shouted at me once. I dinnae even ken if you did shout at me in fact. [Christian]

> I liked the way you would speak to me about stuff instead of just like shouting. I was used to my Mum screaming at me. My Mum like shouting at me, my Dad, well he wisnae really aboot … I had nothing to compare. [Christian]

For Christian, calm forms of discipline seemed new and unfamiliar, and perhaps unsettling. However, he reflects on a comfort of knowing where the edges of our relationship were and how I would react, if things were stretched. He was perplexed on whether this was something fathers did, as he had no point of reference from his own father. For Barry, Mother had not been an enforcer of rules, as he described her as 'not being a hypocrite', and he reflects that he shares this aspect of his parenting with his son, from his Mother, as a role model:

> … she knows everyone is human and she's not going to force someone to do something or live to the strict rules that she never stuck to, she's not been a hypocrite in that way and I think I would be pretty similar to be honest. [Barry]

The second interesting thread to emerge from Barry and James' stories, was the importance of me conveying perceived high expectations, both educationally and employment. Whilst aspirations and positive objectives were in short supply, when reflecting on the influences of role models, coping with life after care and challenging parenting models set by birth parents were more prevalent in the data. For example, Declan reflects on his ambitions of fatherhood, through models set up in our relationship:

> … with you it was all about talking about my day and what I had done and what I was planning to do. I'm not sure I'm describing this well. A big part of who I am, or who I want to be as a dad, is from you … the stuff about daily stuff in this house is the bits I can remember. [Declan]

> When I first met you and started to get to know you and you told me about your company and … that was like first thing for me, you have been there, you have done that. You have made the cash … you have done what most people fail to do. To be honest. That was the first thing that made me think … this is a good guy. There is no many people that have actually done that. Eh? [Christian]

Christian's reflection was a little more concrete than Declan in terms of what he expected from a role model. Christian's perception of success was in the assets we had around us, like cars, our home and holidays. He didn't mention emotional support or space to talk, as Oliver mentions earlier.

To summarise this section, the boys' perceptions of me as a role model adds to the data in the previous section on the title dad. The data suggest I'm able to model positive aspects of fathering, and have the capacity to listen and talk, which may conflict with ideals or examples of their birth fathers. In the next section, I move on to discuss the data around perceptions of birth family for the boys.

5.3 The boys' perspectives on birth family

In this section, I analyse and report the data around boys' perspectives of members of their birth family. I have discussed birth fathers in both the previous sections. My aim here is to focus and report the boys' perceptions of their relationships with Mothers, siblings and extended family. To begin with, I discuss the data around the relationship between the boys and their Mothers.

5.3.1 Mother

Five of the six boys in this study had lived with their Mothers, prior to coming in to care. For these five, Mother was their primary carer in their early life and was the closest relationship they had within their birth families. For Barry, Christian and Oliver, Mother continued to hold this role for them, throughout their time in foster care with me. James reflected on his relationship with Mother in the very early years of his life, through reported facts and stories he had come to know through social work reports, rather than memories recalled. I discuss James' story below. Declan's story was unique, in its lack of reflections containing mother, as he had been raised by his Nana. I will discuss the important part Nana played in his upbringing, prior to care, in section [5.3.2] on extended family. Here, I begin with the boys' perceptions of mothers, as the parent who brought them up. I begin with Aaron, who was reflecting on a traumatic period in his life, living away from his parents, with his auntie, as Mother wasn't coping with looking after him:

> I didn't want to live any of this life, it was a horrific existence, even not being aware what else was there, I was aware I didn't want to live in this cardboard box that it was … but I moved in because my Mum was so … I think by that age, was not capable of looking after me. [Aaron]

Aaron's reflection contains a thread that is constant throughout his stories. He seemed to be angry at his lack of awareness of what parents could or should be doing for him. The data from Aaron on parents and role models suggests he lacked a point of reference on parental models, until he was in high school and a growing awareness of what was missing. The boys' perceptions of their Mother's abilities and inabilities to parent them, were threaded throughout the stories of life at home. For Barry and Christian, Mother was the hero in their story, coping with an absent or negative father figure. In Barry's case, hiding negatives about his Father as a villain, which were kept from him until recently in his life:

> … my mum and him first separated, there was something went on with her and my Dad, my Mum only told me a couple of years back, quite recently actually, they stayed at the high flats and they had finished, my Dad turned up to the house and he was quite drunk, and they were on the 14th floor, he barged his way in and took me, I was still a baby, don't know if I was one or even younger, and locked my Mum out the house and she was hysterical, so my Mum phoned the police and then they turned up and he let them in the house but he was sort of holding me for protection so he didn't get 'huckled' off the police, at one point he hung me off the balcony and he was charged to do with all that, it ended up only being breach of the peace, supposedly, rules of the law and then my Mum stopped us from seeing him because of that, and in terms of fighting to see us, he never really had a leg to stand on because of that. [Barry]

In this reflection, and indeed all the stories, dad's version of events remains unheard. However, what is of additional interest in this extract, is the timing of the disclosure. At the time of the interview, Barry was in his late twenties. He had been living away from Mother for some time, and this update on why Father wasn't part of his life was a revelation for Barry. Yet it added to his Mother's value and kudos, as she hadn't used it earlier. This was important for Barry, as he reflected on Mother's abilities in coping with him and his brother alone. In Christian's stories, he often cited Mother as the source of his problems, yet she was the only parent he really wanted to be with:

> I dunno, at the end of the day, I appreciate everything that you have done for me in my life, do you know what I mean, that is more than you could ever imagine, but like, at the end of the day, she was my Mum and I wanted to go back to her. [Christian]

Christian was reflecting on the end of his placement with me and a decision by social work, that he was part of, for a planned return to Mother. For Christian, this strength of relationship with his Mother outweighed a list of challenging feelings about her, including her method of control by shouting, his memories of her views of life on benefits rather than employment, as perceived values, were a constant source of anger for him in his stories. However, Christian's closing statement in the extract above, summed up his never flinching commitment to his Mother during his time in our family. He did reflect, with some humour, that a single foster father was probably the only 'option' he could cope with, as it didn't impinge upon Mother as a parent:

> .. she liked you, and that meant I could like you. There's no way she would have put up with some other woman being my Mother, do you know what I mean? [Christian]

Whilst also underpinned with talk of love for his Mother, Oliver's' reflections of his relationship with Mother were often tempered with humour hiding a feeling of being let down. For example, when coming into foster care, as his Mother was moving to a rehabilitation centre, which meant he couldn't go with her, as he was aged 16, he tells a story of Mother's way of dealing with the family split:

> … it was like 'we need to get rid of the dug' and obviously I [Oliver] had had that dug for ages and it was like one of my first pets and it kind of broke me up but I was like 'now I am gone'… To be honest, just the same as my Dad, my Mum was absent, so she didn't really say, it was mair like 'you are no in charge, I [Oliver] am in charge, you are no in charge of me … I am in charge of myself'. That is how I see it. [Oliver]

Oliver's excerpt begins with a painful memory about his family dog having to move on, as the family were split up. This is underpinned by a reflection that was a common theme throughout his stories about what he saw as a lack of parenting from both his

Mother and Father. Decisions were being made by systems and individuals out with his, or his parents' control. Although disguised in humour, my notes from the interview, also capture his visible pain and angst at his Mother's apparent lack of value and interest in the dog's needs and Oliver's attachment to it. Whilst it is not immediately explicit in the data, there was a subtext around him mapping this disinterest on to himself. Control was something Oliver craved, and he reflects on his attempts to take control in the following excerpt and others:

> I respect the way that you live but I would never let anybody control me over the way that they live, if you know what I mean? I have always been my ain person and I'll never change, I wouldnae change for anybody to be honest. I wouldn't want to disrespect you in anyway, I would always want to be respective? towards you. [Oliver]

A comfortable conflict was often present in Barry, Christian and Oliver's stories, around comparisons in parenting styles between their Mothers and myself. I use the word comfortable, as Barry, Christian and despite the above excerpts, Oliver, talk openly about missing Mother, with all the perceived challenges, yet saw their life living with me as an addition, rather than a replacement of anything with their Mother. For Aaron, Mother's lack of abilities to care and protect him had developed a distance that he wasn't willing to forgive. At the time of the interview, he hadn't had contact with Mother and Father in over two years. For James, who had been in foster care since the age of eleven, a series of complicated relationships with his Mother's partners, not his birth father, had put some physical and emotional distance between him and his Mother. In the following extract, he reflects on his reactions to the traumatic news that his mother had passed away:

> … this is so bad, this shows you the level of detachment … it was like five months ago … but I was in Germany … I have been living in Germany between January and July or something and I got a phone call, I was on a plane flying to Glasgow … and I was just about to take off and my phone went and it was my sister … and she said … 'James your Mother is dead'... I was like … I kind of went quiet … and I was like 'right ok' and she was like 'yes she went to hospital suddenly and she passed away just kind of overnight' … anyway, I remember going 'I need to go the plane is about to take off' and I sat there and thought 'should I cry?'. I was like … well, I am not … I feel bad for not crying. And I didn't cry and I don't think I have cried once. Maybe I have cried once. And I

> went to the funeral which was a couple of weeks later. I flew to London, I got off the five o'clock flight from Germany in the morning, got into London, drove there, went to the funeral for one hour and did all the things, back in Germany for 11 o'clock at night and I remember my boss being like 'do you need some time off' and I was like 'it doesn't feel … I only went because one day I might regret not going' but I didn't feel like my Mother was gone, my Mother still lives in Edinburgh. [James]

'Mother in Edinburgh' was a reference to his foster Mother Lucy. James retold the story, and even at the time of interview, seemed guilty at his lack of emotion at the loss of his birth mother. Declan's Mother was seldom mentioned during his time in our family. His Mother's custodial sentence was only brought up by Declan in a story about signing his passport. We were planning a family holiday and required Mother's signature on the passport application, which meant a prison visit for Declan and his social worker:

> … Aye, she deliberately messed with the form by signing outside the box … we had to go twice or three times, I think, in the end, we got Mrs Clark [Guidance teacher] to sign it … there was no way I was going to get abroad with us relying on my Mother's signature. [Declan]

Declan perceived his Mothers' apparent attempts to deny him a holiday as yet more evidence of her distance from his life. In the five years living with us, and in the years that followed, this was the only mention of Mother in Declan's stories. For Declan, Nana was the important parental figure and I now move on to report the data around siblings and extended family relationships, as perceived by the boys.

5.3.2 Grandparents and Siblings

In this section, I analyse and report the data that relates to the boys' perceptions of grandparents and siblings. I report my analysis of data that relates specifically to reflections on key family figures that have played an influencing role in the boys' perceptions of growing up. I have structured this section around groups of key relationships and begin with grandparents.

I begin with an analysis of the data around Declan's Nana, as his primary care giver and role model. Declan had lived with his Nana from the age of six, as she was

appointed kinship carer by the social work department. In his reflections of his journey to living with Nana and his time with her, Declan talks fondly of discipline and structure that were absent in significant sections of his story. For example, as discussed in the next section of this chapter [5.4] on professional relationships, Nana had a close working relationship with Declan's school and the guidance teacher team. Declan reports feeling comforted by the joined-up elements of life, and Nana's ability to network with school and, as the following extract highlights, social work systems in caring for him:

> I was living with my Mum until I was six. My Mum disappeared and left me in the house with a Schedule One offender. Left me and my brother in the house with a Schedule One offender. Alone, for over three weeks. My Nana came around to see how we were. She had not been aware that my Mum was gone and hadn't come back. She found out and she took us out the house that day. Social work was phoned and between them they had arranged the full-time care. She already had the full-time care of my two older siblings, Sharon and Dean at that point. She had already been given the primary care of my younger sister, Pauline at that point as well. It was a matter of time before she got us, I suppose. [Declan]

Declan's reflections on Nana are filled with examples of what he perceives as strict parenting, compared to life with Mother. Yet all these memories were filled with a real fondness for some boundaries in his life. In one cross over story between Nana and myself, Declan recalls an occasion when he was hurt by me drawing on his Nana's values in an incident when I caught him smoking:

> I can recall when I lived here, regarding my Nana and the past, that hurt or in any way shape or form were hard were when you were trying to persuade me to give up smoking. That was low, using my Nana as an example. [Declan]

Nana's values were embedded in Declan's accounts of his self-identity and his aims to be a parent. My use of these as a point of reference, in our discussion of health choices, was so abhorrent to Declan that he recalled being reduced to tears at the thoughts of letting her down. Declan also reflected on a pivotal point in his story, when the loss of his Nana started a chain of events leading to him going into residential care and then joining our foster family. This reflection begins with a traumatic memory:

> I lived with my nana up until 2004, 21st of October 2004 … and unfortunately, I found her dead at 2.45 that morning … Then things skyrocketed from there. My elder sister Sharon took over the care of me and the rest of my brothers and sisters. There was six of us, so she had five brothers and sisters to look after and she was only 21-year-old at the time. [Declan]

I was a little taken aback at the 'matter of fact' account, as Declan recalled the chain of events. I recorded in my notes, that they reminded me of the chronology that is attached to the paper work that comes with the boys, when they join our family; a list of significant events that lead to being accommodated, but reflected in the story of a young man making sense of his journey to our family. Within this section Declan establishes his Nana's values as the most important to him while living with his sister. His older sister had made attempts to keep the family together, as well as the start of the split up of the family across various care settings:

> … and Justine was taken into care two days after my Nana died. Because that, still to this day, is quite harrowing. Because the thing my Nana said is 'none of my grandkids will go into care, over my dead body' two days later, after she died, the first one was taken away. [Declan]

In addition to Declan's older sister, other siblings featured in the boys' stories of growing up and values. For Oliver, who had also spent some significant time living with grandparents, his brother was the key character, role model and influencer in his stories. Although, in the following extract, his older sister seemed to be driving the story:

> … it was my big sister, she was like 'right, we are running away' ... So, I went with them. So, we went to my auntie's and my brother had already ran away, so we went to my auntie's thinking … [Oliver]
>
> This is all from Mum. All her kids are … Was Jill [Little Sister] around at this stage? [Colin]
>
> I think she was in care. She was in care for a bit. Obviously, my Mum got her back. But like … it was like we had ran away and we went to my auntie's, cause my brother had ran away and he had moved in there. So we were thinking, 'barry [great], we will move in there tae' and boom, went to my Auntie's, she has phoned the social work and we moved into my nana and granddad's … [Oliver]

Oliver' reflection was strewn with multiple interlocking relationships within his birth family, as he recalls his attempts to escape from Mother and join his Brother at their Auntie's. However, social work systems were part of the family network already, and this chain of events in his story ends with him joining his Brother and Sister at their grandparents. For Declan, Oliver, Aaron and Barry, grandparents played a significant role in their life's pre-care. For Christian, grandparents were on the periphery of his stories, seldom featuring as key characters in reflections, and for James, there was no mention of grandparents, other than his foster parents' role in his sons' life.

As mentioned above, Oliver's Brother played a significant role in his life, both as a support but also as a role model. His brother was the first to break the family chain of unemployment and joined the army. Oliver reflected on this in his story about him joining the army, whilst he lived with us:

> I look to him [Brother] as a role model, and 'cause he was in the army, I wanted to dae what he was daein. But obviously we are two different types, specimens. It was one of the best times, being there, sometimes I look back and think 'I should have stuck at it' but to be honest, what is for you won't go past you so … [Oliver]

Oliver completed the army foundation course, but decided the regiment wasn't for him. He reflects on what he perceives, as a missed opportunity. He seemed caught between following his role model brother, breaking the chain of unemployment and his efforts to remain on a course that he wasn't enjoying:

> I think for me the army thing, the thing that stands out is your sticking power to it. I really respected you for that. I expected you to come … particular the Christmas leave … [Colin]
>
> That was when I was like 'right I am leaving'. [Oliver]
>
> I knew by that stage you weren't enjoying it. [Colin]
>
> That was when … life wasnae life. It was just like being in prison or something. But it wasnae really in prison but no as much freedom as you had. But when you think aboot it you did have that freedom but you just didnae see it as much as you would if you werenae there. [Oliver]

Oliver struggled with his reflection on not meeting what he saw as his brother's values, with the constraints of army life and a factor that was unique to age and stage of life with us. As he was in the army full time, his placement in our family was being discussed by the social work team around him. Through extended discussion with the senior social work team, I managed to persuade them keep his placement open, as I sensed he wasn't coping with army life. Whilst not explicit in the data, I have questioned whether this background discussion played a part in his decisions not to continue with the army; and from a research perspective there is no way of knowing.

Barry's brother also holds a key role in his reflections of his life at home with Mother. In a complex story involving family money being passed from his grandfather, bypassing his Mother and directly to his brother John, Barry reflects on the sudden impact of this on his brother's health and their relationships as a family:

> … my Grandfather separated from his new wife not my Grandmother and he remarried and they went through a separation, and they obviously had money together, and he sold the house and basically there was a big legal battle after it , but he gave all the money to John [Brother], it was like £190,000 or £200,000 to John, obviously we never knew anything about this and John was about 15 or 16 and he had all that money in his bank account, which obviously messed with his head as well. [Barry]

In Barry's reflection, Mother was unaware that her eldest son had this money, and that he was being used to hide the funds from his grandfather's partner. However, Barry was aware and reports this as the start of a cycle of events leading to significant metal health issues for his brother John. Barry reflects on the various family members that seem to add to the continuing demise of his brothers' health. In one of the only mentions of their birth fathers, he describes the shocking moment Father appeared in their lives after the balcony story and his Father's arrest, discussed in section (6.3.1) above:

> I went out to see him and John's back garden backs onto a river or a little stream and is a path on the side of it and my Father had a dog, and I walked out into the garden, he obviously knew were John stayed, and he shouted over "John" and I turned round and is thought "there is my dad" {laughs} and I'd never seen him

> for that long and that was a weird one it was sort of, I walked over shook his hand, but no we sort of never really clicked, and I've always been that sort of, people are going to make an effort then I'm not one to keep trying making an effort with them, so soon as I saw he wasn't making any effort, I just cut him off. [Barry]

Barry's reflection on meeting his Father again had an interesting subtext. It became apparent that John had maintained a relationship with his dad, albeit distant, and that Barry was aware of this, yet it presented a conflict for him, as he cut his father off. For Christian, his big sister was a strong influence on his stories. Christian had grown up with his Mother and sister and had reflected on the change to a foster dad, which I discuss in the opening section of this chapter. I've drawn on Christian's story here, as it was a good example of the complex, non-nuclear family constructs three of boys discussed. Christian, Oliver and Declan, all of whom had siblings from different fathers and mothers, often had to pause to reflect on who belonged to whom:

> I have got another sister. Another two, sorry. I have got … so I have now got Cath, Christine. Cath is obviously full blood, she is my Mum and Dad's. Then Christine is my Dad's daughter and I see her. She has got a bairn as well. I am an uncle now. [Christian]

> … he [Dad] has got Mary, she is older than me and then he has got one that he doesn't know if it is his or no. I have never met him, he is supposed to … well my Mum would go 'that is your bigger brother' and I would go 'that is no my brother' cause I dinnae know him. There is Mary … but we don't really get on, but I would class her as a half-sister but then there is Daisy, she is in care, because there was some raid or something, the house got raised or something … and she got tooken off them. [Oliver]

Whilst it did appear confusing, Christian, Barry and Declan reflected on these large families, all with some humour, as they struggled to remember how they were related to other members of the family, even if they had never met.

In this section I have tried to give some insights to the key family relationships that featured in the reflections of the boys. There were some shocks for me, as aspects of the boys' stories came to light that I had been unaware of, as well as the often-surprising way they seemed to reflect on difficult stories, in a matter of fact way. I now

move on to discuss the third set of relationships that are part of the boys' stories and the professional relationships that feature in the reflections on life.

5.4 The boys' perspectives on the professionals in their life.

To begin with, I give an account of the boys' stories, as they discuss the professionals in their lives. Stories of memories around first engagement with professional services, such a social workers and teachers, and that these stories develop concepts of professional relationships beyond the binaries of good and bad. Some professionals in the boys' lives, perceived as both autonomous individuals and as part of a system. Perhaps of most interest within this section is the emergence of at least one 'good guy' story in each of the boys' interviews. The second section is dedicated to discussions on family relationships and the constructs developed by the boys, as they navigate membership of both birth and foster families, or not. I begin by exploring the data that relates to first engagement with systems for the boys.

Foster families are brought together, supported, and occasionally challenged by the systems around children in care. All the boys talked about social workers, teachers, and agency staff, such as charities working with care experienced young people, that have played a part in their lives. For all six of them, this started with social work involvement in their families prior to coming in to care:

> Social work came in and then kind of supported my sister and got her into a good school ... That is how social work became involved and that is how my sister's social worker became mine. [Aaron]

> We went out on trips with the social work, but they would take us out with my Mother, they were just take it out for an one hour respite. Yeah and they were just take us out to wherever for a couple of hours and do a wee activity and then home [Barry]

> Before I came into care, she [social worker] caused a fair whack of hassle for my family like. I can't really remember. I was well young. But I just remember there being a lot of drama and that around her and even when I was kind of in the process of coming into care, she was still kind of being like really weird and that. … I didn't even know she was a social worker, I was that young. I didn't even know that, eh. I just knew she was someone that I would go and speak to, about like my dad, and that. And being angry and that. But I didn't actually know

> anything about who she was or that. I just used to get pissed off with her. Just get really annoyed at her. [Christian]

These data excerpts are examples of a range of experiences and memories of social work interactions reported by the boys, as they moved from their birth families and into the care system.

There is a rich vein of stories and memories around social workers running through the data. These relationships were complex, and the social workers were not viewed in simplistic binary terms as either 'good' or 'bad'. Each of the professional relationships were distinct for each of the boys and shaped by their experiences in care. For example, Declan holds positive memories of the social worker that was linked to him and his five siblings:

> The social worker I had at the time was [Janet] and I don't know what she was doing, she was a really good social worker, I couldn't fault her, but trying to keep track of six kids that were all in her case notes that were being thrown about Edinburgh and the Lothians, one day they were here, one day they were there. She couldn't keep up. When she finally came out to the house to speak with me and have a chat with me, she agreed that day that I had to go … it wasn't safe, it wasn't suitable. [Declan]

In amongst the chaos of life living with his eldest sister after his Nana died, Declan aligns the social worker with the chaos, before setting her up as his 'rescuer', at the beginning of a chain of events leading to residential care and then foster care with me.

Both Declan and Aaron's account share a common theme, in which the social worker is seen as the rescuer, the person that removes them from the chaos or dangers of home life. Aaron discusses a difficult part of his story, and the day he disclosed in school, what was happening at home:

> I remember my social worker just coming to school, picking me up and taking me away… nothing to my name, my school clothing. My social worker bought me a toothbrush and some pyjamas. And I just sat there. And I kind of just accepted it. it was getting me out of a situation that was very heavy. There was lots of stuff going on. [Aaron]

For Declan and Aaron, there is an underlying sense of trust in the professionals and a system that is there to protect them, at the point they come into care. For the other boys, there was a mixed reflection on the relationship with social work in the early stages of their associations with the care system

As part of a social work referral and perceived by Aaron as part of 'the system', Susan, a counsellor with Children and Adult Mental Health Services (CAMHs), played a central role in Aaron's important relationships. Susan supported Aaron in dealing with the challenging family circumstances that led to his life in care. Aaron explains that, during the early stages of being a member of our foster family, Susan gave him the *head space* to deal with the troubling questions in his head and this allowed him and I to focus on his future:

> I had CAMHS and it was before we had really developed that relationship. I think that our relationship now, to the first year, is quite different … So I used to spend lots of time speaking to her … and our relationship wasn't that. I don't really know how to describe it but you were there … I knew you were there to support me but if I had a problem I went to Susan … if I was having a really difficult question in my head or a difficult time thinking about something, I went to Susan, whereas if that was happening now, of course, I would come straight to you. [Aaron]

Interestingly, in terms of ongoing meaningful relationships, years after the counselling has finished, Aaron and Susan still catch up with each other about once a year. It gives Aaron a chance to reflect and keep in touch with an important relationship, and for Susan, perhaps an opportunity to follow up on a success story for her.

Declan's story is full of warmth and positive memories of the staff in the unit, in which he has vested the attributes of what he regards as a good upbringing. His residential social worker, Peter, is discussed fondly and continued to play a role in Declan's life after leaving the unit and moving into our family. Peter was important person to Declan, and we encouraged him to come and visit or take Declan out every now and again, after leaving the unit. 'Peter came out and took me for a game of pool and that was years after I had left Stepville Unit' [Declan].

For Oliver, whose partner was in residential care, whilst he lived with us in foster care and whose new-born son Steve had just gone in to foster care at the time of interview, there was an inherent distrust in 'the system'. Yet, there is a tension present in his account, with him crediting the same system with bringing us (him and I) together:

> Cause I dinnae really like speaking to social workers as you have seen … in the past… social work, I would say they made me feel like nothing. Obviously, baby Steve's social worker, I'd say she has made us feel like nothing … like Josh [charity worker] and people who were trying to help you. She wasn't even trying to help us at all. She was putting negatives and stuff that wasn't valid, that wasn't even meant to be in the reports, just made us oot to look like bad people. [Oliver]

> The first day I met you, I was like 'that is us', a bond that cannae be broken … I am glad I got here [our house] instead of hostels … that is what was getting mentioned if I didnae take a place like here. I just thought of it as 'well I may as well just see how it goes', it obviously went the right way instead of the wrong way. [Oliver]

Social workers and other professionals were talked about as individuals, but they were also often also discussed by the boys, as representatives of the 'the system'. Multiple and often disparate forms of relationships with social workers and agency staff were spread across all six of the boys' stories. The boys fluidly move people on and offside in their stories, as they move through episodes in their life. Josh, mentioned by Oliver in the previous extract, is a hero in his account of social work, who worked towards what Oliver saw as a common goal and a decision in getting Oliver into our foster family. Interestingly, Josh worked for Aberlour, a charity that provides fostering and residential care, as well as outreach for young people like Oliver. However, Oliver saw Josh as 'unattached' to the system and on his side:

> The first time he met me … and he will tell you this story as well … was like 'who do you think you are, professional footballer or something, get oot ma hoose noo'. 'I don't need no social worker, get oot' … I'm glad we got on like … he must have thought 'who does this gadgie think he is?'… It would be good to meet up with him again. He was a good guy like. [Oliver]

There was a real warmth in Oliver's memories of Josh, smiling and laughing as he recalls their first meeting and a sense of loss at him not being in his life anymore. All six of the boys had experiences of at least one professional: teachers, agency staff and social workers as key positive relationships in their lives. Both Declan and Christian

attended the same high school at different times but shared the same guidance teacher, Mrs Clark:

> She knew my Nana … She had been out to the house several times for all my brothers and sisters. I knew her long before I went to high school. She would come out to the house. Her and my nana got on quite well … So she had a really clear background on what life was like for me and I think that gave her the advantage that she might not have had over other kids, where she could be brutally honest and it would be accepted without insult. For me that worked in certain cases. When I was misbehaving in class, Sarah Clark would be quite happy to walk up to me and go 'do you want me to phone your nana? If I phone her, you know for a fact she will be down the road'. And she could get away with that, because she knew if I went home and told my nana, my nana would turn around and say 'well next time, get her to phone me'. So … she was quite important in school, I think, for me. [Declan]

> She was brilliant. Hat off to Sarah Clark she was brilliant. Absolutely fantastic. She wasn't just treating me as a student. Do you know what I mean? She like, ken, she treated me like she meant something. Do you know what I mean? Which meant a lot to me at the time because I didn't really feel that there was a lot of people in my life who gave a shit. Do you know what I mean? [Christian]

Guidance teachers were important characters in the stories of the four boys who lived with me in full time care. In these accounts Guidance teachers seem to stand out as important relationships. Underpinning the memories were a sense of personal connection, perceived through aspects of personal commitment and authenticity, evidenced, as this section has suggested, going beyond the role or job description to invest on the boys.

In some sections of the boys' stories, teacher relationships and schools were discussed in memories of negotiating birth family membership. Barry and James, both in respite, gave a more peripheral account of teachers, as minor characters in the development of their story. This may have been due to school playing a smaller role in our time as a respite foster family, rather than any reduction in the importance of teachers in their lives.

For example, Barry's only mention of teachers were about choices he made in education, where teachers had encouraged him to aim for University, but he saw his trajectory as moving into the family business, as a chimney sweep. Nestled within this

story are a complex set of loyalties to extended family members, that overshadowed, what Barry describes as positive encouragements from his teacher, to put himself first and to draw on his apparent intellect to try and set out his own path. No matter how strong the bond with a teacher, the draw of birth family was so strong, there were no options in Barry's decisions:

> … the headteacher, they all said you're sort of University, sort of, yeah, you're smart enough to do it, they were really trying to encourage me, that I was throwing my whole life away here, I was always sort of, thought I was too smart for that, everyone in my families has been self-employed, whether it was my grandad, my uncle, em, all my grandad's brothers all had their own businesses [Barry]

Barry goes on to talk about his memories of my views and values on education and, with some regret, the missed opportunities by leaving school early. He discusses his memories of our house, cars, holidays and what he regarded as the fruits of a good education, had he taken this route. However, reflecting as he spoke, he returned quite quickly to the family business and his important role in continuing this.

For Oliver, teachers were on the very edges of his life, a necessary evil that had to be accommodated to keep his family happy. They bore no direct influence on his decisions in life but did influence his opportunities:

> Well I got excluded from Speyview high twice, I think. Once for hitting a teacher. Well I never hit her, I went like that, tapped her on the shoulder, there … and then I got excluded! I remember that like the back of my hand. We were just sitting outside at the bus stop, and then this lassie has just came up and I am like 'how you daein' and I just tapped her on the shoulder and she asked me my name and that, and I think back to it all the time and I should have just went 'my name is James or something …' but me, I have went, 'my name is Oliver [Surname]' … and got excluded. [Oliver]

Even as Oliver retold the story, it was with a sense of humour and to some extent fondness at a situation that seemed to reflect his perceived luck with systems, such as education. For Oliver, and all the other boys, your 'success' in care system seemed to depend on the luck of the draw on the professionals you got, and the relationships you could manage, and in some cases manipulate, to your own benefit, discussed in more

detail in section (8.3.3). For most of the boys in this study, some of the relationships with professionals went beyond professional roles and were perceived as genuine and to some extent seen as altruistic. This was not the case for all the boys or all the professionals, some seemed to develop these relationships, and others didn't. The overarching theme to emerge from this section, was that having someone who has been with them along the journey was important, that someone was able to hold their story together. This was important and underpinned continuity in a life full of changes and uncertainty.

The limited capacity in this chapter has prevented a full and in-depth discussion of all the professional individuals discussed by the boys in their account of life in foster care. Here, I have given some examples of key relationships that the boys have highlighted as important to them. In the next section, I explore the data on families, both birth and foster.

5.5 Summary and conclusions

In this chapter, I have provided an overview and analysis of the boys' perceptions on key relationships within their lives. In the first section, I discuss the boys' perceptions of me, as a foster father, and dealing with the title 'dad', as used by themselves and others. I also report the data on the boys' perceptions of role models in shaping their lives. The data and my analysis of it demonstrated the fluid and flexible way the boys navigate identities and avoid complex social stigma through this navigation of language and family construct. The part that role models play in shaping values and beliefs is discussed in the next chapter, here, I explored the boys' perceptions of what a father should or could be, and the niche role I played, as a single foster father, in not replacing Mother.

In the second section, I reviewed the data around family relationships, and the key roles that featured in the boys' reflections. For key themes around extended, non-nuclear family constructs were reflected upon, and a focus on Mother as a central character in their lives, except for Declan, whose Nana took up the primary caring role. Declan's Nana, as well as other grandparents featured in reflections on rescue from

the chaos of life at home, the setting of perceived good values, as well as Barry's story of financial manipulation of his brother by his Grandfather.

I closed this chapter with an analysis of the professional roles in the lives of the boys. From first memories of social work involvement in their lives, to stories of social workers, teachers and agency staff that the boys perceived to go beyond their role to help them, I closed this section with some examples of reflections on the good and strong professional relationships that supported their upbringing.

It was my intention in this chapter to report the boys' perceptions of relationships in their lives. Central to any discussion on upbringing, is a requirement to understand the relationships that underpin the passing on of values and beliefs from one generation to the next. I now move on to discuss the values and beliefs, as perceived by the boys, that shape their reflections on their time in care with me, and an upbringing with a single male foster father.

Chapter 6 - Values and Beliefs

6.1 Introduction

In Chapter 2 of Moldenhauer's work *Forgotten Connections*, he addresses the topic of presentation, and what way of life do we wish to present to children by living with them in the course of everyday shared living (Mollenhauer, 2014). 'In all activities of upbringing, it is both necessary and unavoidable that adults present to children the lives they live and the values they live them by' (Mollenhauer, 2014, p19). Mollenhauer draws on values and beliefs as a process of passing on the good in our lives and preparing or readying the next generation for life during and beyond our upbringing.

In this chapter, I explore the data that relates to the boys' perceptions of the values and beliefs that come from the various lived cultures in their lives. In Chapter 3 (3.2.3), I established Mollenhauer's use of the terms culture and upbringing, as referring to the passing on of what we (adults) hold to be the good in our life on to children (Mollenhauer, 2014). In this chapter, I expand on this definition, highlighting tensions that are present. Firstly, Mollenhauer's concepts of culture require an understanding that adults hold their heritage as fit and suitable for the next generation's future. In order for upbringing to take place, hopes and aims for a future for our children are located in these heritages. There is no mention of how children removed from their birth parents manage competing or contradictory heritages. Secondly, Mollenhauer's definition of culture includes a warning that adults who lose faith in the future, can lose their desire for the upbringing of their children, and be reduced to seeing their children as mirror images of themselves and not as agents of their own potential. Both points are returned to in more detail in Chapter 8. Within the context in which this study took place, that is a protectionist positioning by social work for children in its care, there is a danger that child-raising is reduced to ritualised duty, which can diminish experiential possibilities that feed a potentially valued heritage.

The structure of this chapter mirrors that of Chapter 5 and reports my findings in three sections. In the first section 6.2, I focus on reflections from the boys on what they see as values and beliefs generated within the culture of our foster family. These reflections include the boys' foster siblings, our extended foster family, including my parents. In 6.3 I examine the boys' perceptions of values and beliefs

that come from birth family and how these influences how they see themselves now and looking to the future. In the final section (6.4), I address the boys' perception of values and beliefs generated within the professional culture of social work as they have experienced it. Findings which relate to the values delivered through common interest through the common third, are discussed in more detail in Chapter 7. A central tenet in this study's research question and contribution to knowledge within social pedagogy and upbringing involves a process of passing on values and beliefs between one generation and the next. This chapter provides a structured perspective on the development of values, both birth and foster family, as well as the boys' views on the values perceived to upheld, or not, by the professionals involved in their lives.

6.2 The boys' perception of foster family values and culture.

In this section, I present findings that relate to the boys' perceptions of the values and beliefs they have encountered and experienced in their life within our foster family. My analysis identified five themes: family values, education, employment, opportunities and social networks.

6.2.1 Family values and the value of family

Central to the boys' reflections on being part of our foster family were accounts of memberships, new relationships, and renegotiating what family values could mean:

> … there are lots of gaps, so when I came here, we started to plug those gaps. So, a lot of my development comes from being here and from you. Which is why … when I take you and social work, to take more credit for my achievements than you do, because you guys refuse to take any credit for them, or little credit for them, I think that fundamentally being here over the last six years has enabled me to … in quite a safe environment to develop what would take people a lot longer … then I managed to do in a short amount of time. I mean, I had the whole learning to be a younger brother and an older brother and a son … learning to be a son sounds like quite a strange thing. [Aaron]

Aaron's reflection on his upbringing has four interwoven strands. He had identified gaps in his upbringing at home with Mother and dad, as a young carer for his older sister and parents. He also navigated the absence of parental investment in what he

described, as a neglected childhood. Here, he highlights his perception of the role of social work system as an intervention in the form a system, rather than individual, as pivotal in offering an opportunity to develop as a young man. Perhaps more interestingly, in his reflection, Aaron goes on to identify and challenge an established notion that any opportunity for development needs to take place in the early stages of a child life; also reflected in the current dominant literature around the importance of early years (Cameron *et al.*, 2016):

> … statistic, well not a statistic but the research that shows that children's … most of the children's opportunities and chances and ability and personality, all that sort of stuff, is usually set by the age of three. I go and look at that and think 'that is not true, not in my case'. And as happens with a lot of neglected children, we don't make those links in our brain; all those little neurons don't connect up. So, there are lots of gaps … [Aaron]

Aaron was unique amongst the six young men who participated in that he took an active interest in research around care experienced children and read widely about educational outcomes for young people in his situation. However, this reflection touches on a theme that was common across the boys' stories, of ways of living as a family that were presented to them as members of our foster family:

> To be honest, you taught me a lot of stuff, you taught me a lot of general knowledge and that. That sounds weird saying that, but you taught me a lot of stuff that I know today like … just through having normal conversations with you, we would speak about loads of stuff and like, I liked that, I enjoyed that, I don't know, I feel like I kind of … it sounds weird, but I have widened my vocabulary since I moved in with you. [Christian]

Christian reflected on an important part of his time with me and a time to talk about day to day living. This suggests the importance of time to talk, and being listened to, about not only their worries and concerns about birth family but also their hopes and aims for life. The space and time for reflection also involved important aspects of autonomy and decision making. As a long-term foster carer, I have always tried to ensure the boys move to our local high school as this offers opportunities for social network development. However, it isn't always straight forward as it also involves difficulties in leaving established friendship groups. Depending on the age of the boy,

and external factors such as access to birth family, and my ability to transport the boys to an existing school, I try to allow the boys to decide on when to make this change. In the following extract, Declan recalls the moment he decided to change to our local school and to leave the secure attachment he had to existing school, friends and teachers. He begins with the moment he decided to tell me about his decision:

> I remember that quite clearly because it is the one time you have been speechless. You were cooking dinner in the kitchen, and I came through, and I asked if I could have a chat with you, and we just sat in the kitchen, and I said to you 'I think it is time I moved to Johnston High school' and I think you were kind of pleased at that point that I had finally made that decision. But you had always made it clear that that was my decision. [Declan]

Declan had been living with us for nearly three years by this stage, and his choice to remain at his existing school had involved transporting him by car, to and from school, every day as there was no direct bus route, and taxis were not an option from the social work department. It also involved a short period of him trying to cycle to and from school, which did not last long. There were also some social influences within his decision as he explained:

> … what kicked that off was I was getting tired. My knees were getting sore with the cycling and stuff. I know I could have got the bus. But I still needed to go back to Greyhouse to see my friends ... So, I just felt that with the tiredness, my knees were getting sore with cycling every day, I felt that if I moved to Johnston, I could increase my social life and I am not having to do as much work in the morning. I think the kicker for me was I got an extra 20 minutes in bed or something. [Declan]

Despite offers to start lifts by car again, Declan reflected on a social life a little closer to our home and school as the potential source of a social network in our area.

Agency, and the power to make decisions on issues such as education came up for all the boys in full-time care. For Barry and James, these decisions also included some say over coming to me for respite. In the following extract, James talks about his memories of having a choice. It is not clear, to what extent he had a say on respite carers, but his memory of this choice was evident in his story:

> I can't remember thinking I need to do this. It felt like a natural extension to my life … it felt like I had a choice. You got on well with Lucy and David and I loved being here. We talked about lots of stuff, especially education and what I could do if I set my mind to it … [James]

James goes on to tell a story about a picture of a car in my wallet, as a motivator to succeed and how it came to mind when discussing educational values. I should note that I have no memory of the picture mentioned, although I did own the car described at one stage, although long before James lived with me:

> I have told so many people this story. So … I remember you told me once the story of how you wanted a Lotus Elise, and how you put a picture of a Lotus Elise in your wallet … so every time you saw it, it reminded you of 'this is what I am working towards, this is what I am doing it for' or whatever … and when it came round to Uni time, I had a … I had a brochure, I found a brochure in the career's service saying 'University of Dyson …' because you had advised me that was the best university, a good one to go to. [James]

In this section, I have highlighted examples of the critical part our foster family played in presenting positive family values through talking and allowing choice and agency where they were not at odds with social works' position embedded around protection and safe caring. In the next section, I move on to talk about values on education and employment, as presented by our foster family culture.

6.2.2 Educational values and work ethics

When asked if the boys could say what our foster family values were, they all started with education as the principal value in their reflections. This may have been influenced by our family life and my ongoing studies, at either Masters level or the PhD, depending on when they lived with our family:

> I was thinking about straight away, the one that struck me. I think it pulls into education phenomenally well, is the Masters degree, and seeing you do that. Because university was never … it was always a kind of circle away. It was always someone else knew someone else … and I think that the University of Hoover came and visited [Highschool] and we all went and got a lovely tour of the campus and got to spend the day … I think I was with you when that happened. It was kind of March/April/May time, around there. And then of course you went and did your masters, so I was very, very much aware of

> university and what was available. And I think that kind of clicked for me. Of seeing you doing this and seeing you working hard at it and knowing … not that I could do that but I would like to do that. [Aaron]

In this extract, Aaron is reflecting on educational values as he experienced them in our family and how it was presented to him as a possible option. There is a tangible shift in his awareness of the opportunities he thought were accessible, encapsulated in the sentence '[University] was always a circle away', and a move from unattainable to possible. At the time of the interview, he was in his second year of university and moved on to reflect on the changes to himself that happened while in university and how this influenced change in his social network:

> I must have had a strong Scottish accent. I know it has diluted over the years, and even now being at University for two years, has completely diluted it. I was a complete outsider to scouting and they just accepted me. It was so friendly and warm. The things I got to do, the hiking, the camping, all those … a new thing every week it was great. It was stimulating. And I think that is probably why I have come back and tried to do it again. Cause I have seen what I can get out of it and I would love to give someone else that. But I don't think I will ever give someone what I have got. Cause scouting changed my life quite a lot in terms of perspective. Coming into foster care was great, looking at Edinburgh wide. I had this … how other people live in Edinburgh. [Aaron]

In the above extract, Aaron reflects on changes in the way he speaks and presents himself to others, as a student in university. He closes this section of his story with a broader awareness of what he sees as life in Edinburgh and ways of living in the city, so disconnected from his experiences in life before foster care.

In terms of education values picked up or noticed by the boys while living with us, James had similar experiences to Aaron and a successful time at university although his journey to university presented more barriers, in the form of expectations from others:

> … and all the teachers for the year had said 'oh you know …', behind my back they had said to Lucy [foster carer], 'James thinks he has applied for universities, really, Lucy, you should get him to start applying for colleges and all that stuff' and she didn't tell me this, because that would have disheartened me … and then also teachers were saying to me 'we think you should drop some of your lessons,

> so you can focus on a couple and get good grades on them, rather than getting average on all of them'. Right, and I was like 'no I am not dropping any' and I was so determined, and I remember when Lucy got the results out … I got like all As and Bs and we were both crying our eyes out. [James]

He moved on to a story, started in the previous section above, and a picture of a car in my wallet as a motivator. Here he talks about his choice of university:

> … talking with friends and it was between the University of Dyson and Julius University and the only reason we wanted to go to Julius University is because the girl boy ratio is five to one. So … our heads won over whatever … and we thought 'the University of Dyson is the best for marketing' so I cut out the logo of the University of Dyson and I had it in my wallet for about ten months or something … [James]

Four of the six boys who participated did not attend University, and for them, the educational values in our family held differing experiences. Declan recalled a statement, almost verbatim, that sounded like a mantra from me on school:

> … school is the key to your future, and if you pay attention, you stick in, and you work hard in school, you might not enjoy it, but that will give you the foot in the door, and the tools to enjoy life later on because without the good education you can't get a good job, you can't get a good wage and enjoy life. [Declan]

Declan also reflected on educational values when we talked about what an upbringing meant to him, and how educational values were presented in various stages of his life, from Nana to residential care and then our foster family:

> Oh, my understanding of upbringing is how someone is raised, how they are brought up. And I think for me, I have had different types of upbringings, it has not been 'an upbringing'. There has been different ways and different styles of doing it. My nana had her own very, very signature and unique way of doing it, which was … she was raising us as though we were fifties children. Back in those days. To the care home where … it isn't more an upbringing as a 'sauntering along'. Drive you to school, pick you up and then you get left to do what you want when you come home. Somebody asks if you have done your homework, then you are fine. [Declan]
>
> Detached a little bit? [Colin]

> Yes. So, to come in here where someone is actively looking out for you and your interests, 'have you done your homework? Can I check your homework?', 'actually I have not got homework', 'if you have not got homework, give me ten minutes and I'll give you homework'. Which is … [Declan]
>
> Still happens today. [Colin]
>
> Happens with Luke [Son] now … So there is different ways of having an upbringing or being brought up, and it is unique to the parent I think. [Declan]

It was interesting to hear Declan map his educational values onto his parenting style with his son Luke. He reflected on how he saw my parenting style compared to his own and to what extent he sees values as part of parenting. I began by asking him how he would describe himself as a dad:

> Tough love. I think that is the way to describe it. It is a phrase I picked up. I don't know where I picked it up, but I picked it up and I use it now. A lot of the values that were instilled in me here are transferred and used with Luke now. So, things like education. Luke is four weeks into primary one. He gets his homework which is reading and writing. He has to write so many words a day and do so much reading a day and on top of that, there is extra homework which is provided by me. I have a book of ABCs, which is a dot to dots and he will sit and do that extra homework with me. Which is something I got from you. If I didn't have homework, I would be given homework. [Declan]

Not all of the boys saw such simple mapping of values and experiences. For example, Christian saw some distance between my experiences in University and what he saw as possible for himself:

> Cause obviously you have been to University, you have done all this shit, done this, that and the next thing … do you know what I mean. Ken? So, you know stuff, you are smart, and you are intelligent … I don't know, I had a lot of respect for you since the day I met you to be honest … but school wasn't for me at that stage [Christian]

Christian reflected on the multiple tensions present during his time with us. The constant emotional tussle between loving and wanting to be with his Mother, and sometimes the guilt associated with enjoying his time with our foster family. School

held different priorities for Christian, and this was reflected in some painful memories of his time in school, which also conflicted with what he saw as vital values to me:

> … to be honest, I know you wanted me to do well and to stick in, but I hated school. I hated everything about it and the people … I was quite shy and that and people used to think … that it was a weakness so they would take the piss out of me and that and I would just get pissed off at them and that is when I would go nuts because I would … I would be so quiet and that and not saying much and that and then people would like start trying to slate me and I would be like, 'wait a second, I am no taking that …' and that is when the trouble would come about because I would end up fighting with people or just arguing with teachers or what not. [Christian]

Nestled within Christian's reflection is a subtext of him processing the complications in his life and this *quietness* being interpreted as a weakness by others. He saw this as one of the sources of his many fights and exclusion from school. At the time of the interview, he had been living away from us for some time and had changed school almost five times, including special educational provisions. However, in reflecting on this period with a tone of pride, Christian describes how he turned things around:

> I ended up getting put into Otterly [Alternative Educational Provision], and that was when I met my pal Jess that I was telling you about earlier, and she has become one of my best pals. But I don't speak to her anymore. But it meant I like done nationals and that, cause I got put back a year, cause I missed a year of school, so I got put back, so I done like a year there and got my national 4s and shit like that. Pretty much standard grades. [Christian]

Christian had come full circle in his story and moved swiftly from memories of painful times in school to achieve the grades he needed to get a job he was enjoying. My notes from the interview show that at the time he was telling his story I felt he was looking for a reaction and seeking some indication of my recognising his success and that he was meeting what he saw as my educational values. Education and work are often reflected upon by the boys, as either a missed or seized opportunity. In the next section, I move on to report the findings around opportunities and networks. OK but can you summarise what your findings are in relation to education values?

6.2.3 Opportunities and networks

In this section, I explore the boys' reflections on opportunities presented by our foster family culture and the networks they have developed or accessed while living with us. Four of the boys, Aaron, Christian, Declan and Oliver, all mentioned opportunities and networks directly in their reflections. Neither James nor Barry, both respite boys, mentioned them directly but did discuss accessing parts of my life and the people I knew. To begin with, I explore what the boys saw as opportunities presented to them during their time in our foster family:

> … the opportunities presented to me were so great and so varied that I kind of just kept grabbing all of them. As you know. You say you like to open doors for children, but you don't expect them to walk through all of them like I did. [Aaron]
>
> You grabbed every opportunity and every day, but that is … is it a bad thing. [Colin]
>
> I don't think it is. I was actually thinking earlier about what you might possibly ask me and I was thinking about if you look at present set up of Oliver, Sam and I, we each have something that is unique to us but we share with you. I don't know if you have seen this. But Oliver's love of movies I think you share with him quite well. And Sam with rugby and me with scouting. [Aaron]

In this extract, Aaron is reflecting on the culture of our family, on the importance of opportunities and shared interests that were presented to him and his foster brothers. He is drawing on a metaphor that I have often used when talking with them about my role as a foster father. I have described my role as a foster father, like that of a concierge, and a determination to open as many doors as I can for the boys. I am aware that they may not step through all, but it is important to present as many as possible.

Aaron reflected, with some pride, on accessing networks, such as scouting. I have been involved with scouting for nearly thirty years and recognise both the health aspects of activity and exercise, as well as the networks that can develop from such organisations:

> … it was a social group, I went along, and I had fun. I had never done anything like it before, and in the first few weeks, months, it wasn't as I know scouting, outdoorsy … it wasn't?? or was a baptism by fire initially. So when I went there, I got to know these people and they were so nice and friendly and kind and not

> what I had been aware of … [Area of Mother and dad's house] is very … dog eat dog. There is always one above you and one below you. There is very few equals, whereas going into scouting you were all on that pegging. What was very interesting is they all knew each other. I was the only one that they didn't know but that was not a problem. I was instantly accepted, and I grew into loving it. [Aaron]

Aaron is reflecting on a network, within his scout group, of children and young people who grew up together, attended the same school and were members of the group. Despite being an established network, he comments on the ease by which he was accepted and became a member, sharing similar aims and values. What is not apparent is the extent to which Aaron feels genuine or authentic about his identity within the group. He moved on to reflect on some of his achievements while in scouting:

> … two significant achievements stand out for me, my gold Duke of Edinburgh award and then my explorer belt Iceland trip. I will always look back on that as life changing. You get a measure of yourself in situations like that. It's also quite nice that people don't get it sometimes, a belt doesn't mean anything to people outside scouting but opens up the opportunity to tell my story about Iceland. [Aaron]

Aaron had taken part in a ten-day expedition hiking across the country of Iceland, carrying all his camping equipment and food, with a group of scouting friends. The expedition must also have an aim or study involved, and Aaron's group chose the geology of Iceland. The award is referred to as an explorer belt expedition and is only completed after a presentation by the group, to a panel of experts on the topic, as well as gathered friends and family. Unlike most scouting achievements and a badge as recognition, this award is recognised by a belt buckle. Aaron does mention the distance between his early life experiences and the expedition, as well as our mutual interest in scouting:

> … we share and shared scouting and that's quite a big part of my development, but I think it was more a part of my development because it was with you and it was having you in it with me and … or even not having you in it and you pushing me to do camps and stuff. I have very rarely been away from a home environment [Aaron]

The fine line between encouragement and autonomy is demonstrated in Aaron's account. He is aware that he was presented with the opportunity, encouraged, but given the space to choose his level of engagement. At the time of writing, Aaron had become a leader, working with children in a neighbouring area to where we live, and still counts scouting as his primary social network:

> I think that is probably why I have come back and tried to do it again. Cause I have seen what I can get out of it and I would love to give someone else that. But I don't think I will ever give someone what I have got. Cause scouting changed my life quite a lot in terms of perspective. Coming into foster care was great, looking at Edinburgh wide. I had this … how other people live in Edinburgh. Scouting gave me a worldwide perspective of how things work. You thought about being one of 30 million people [Scout membership worldwide]. It was quite enlightening and great for friends. All of my best friends are scouters. [Aaron]

Aaron's thoughts on the role of scouting in both his and my life, has provide a tangible example of a link between Jonas Salk's famous quote 'Good parents give their children roots and wings. Roots to know where home is, wings to fly away and exercise what has been taught' (Salk quoted in Hollis, 2016 p101); and Mollenhauer's stance on a requirement for those involved in raising children, for children to reach a position facing the world:

> This negotiation of a 'position facing the world' is an important one in that it involves a necessary delay or 'slowing down' of the impact of adult life upon children. The absence of such a 'slowing down' can give rise, from a pedagogical perspective, to problematic relations. (Mollenhauer, 1983,(Smith, 2013)

Not all the boys have stepped through the scouting door, and few have enjoyed the experience as much as Aaron. For Christian, it was a social step too far:

> … scouts weren't for me, ken. I'm not saying anything bad about them, I know you like them and were one, and Aaron liked it, but just not for me. Too posh and too many rules for me … [Christian]

For Declan, opportunities were mentioned in his accounts of his memories of our house and horses. During the early stages of his time in care with us, we lived on a

farm on the outskirts of the city and had horses on the property. Declan had previously spent some time riding as an activity, with his residential unit. He reflects on the moment he spotted the stables on his first visit to the farm:

> I think for me when I seen that you had the horses, and things like that. That kind of got me excited because I have always loved horses. I was at Pinkerton while I was at Stepville [Residential Unit] working with Pinkerton Riding School, so that opportunity and seeing that put a big smile on my face. [Declan]

Declan talks the positive aspects of parts of his life joining up, a positive memory from his life in the unit, continuing as an opportunity in his life in our foster family culture. Some of the boy's stories involved wat they saw as a missed opportunity in not having access to our family values earlier in life. In the following extract, Oliver discussed education and what might have happened had he joined our family earlier:

> … I wished I'd come earlier, you know, like Sam and Aaron [Foster brothers], and had those opportunities in school and stuff, like … I think I would have had better grades and stuff … well I wouldn't say grades, but I would have better schooling, probably. [Oliver]

Oliver arrived in our family aged sixteen, and we focused on further education and employment during his time with us. However, my notes from the interview reveal how touched I was by this discussion and saddened by Oliver's real regrets at what might have been, compared to what he perceived as his foster brothers' successes.

In this section, I have reported and given examples of the data that relates to the boys' perceptions of opportunities and networks. For some of the boys, opportunities were linked to networks, such as scouting, and for others, they were an extension of the values reflected in our family culture around work and education. In the next section of this chapter, I move on to explore values and beliefs within birth family cultures, as perceived by the boys.

6.3 The boys' perceptions of birth family values and culture

There are three key themes in this section. First, there appeared to be a disconnect between grandparents' perceived values and beliefs and those associated birth parents.

Second, the boys' perceptions of educational aspirations within the birth family, is that they were diminished and often overlooked by parents. Lastly, for the boys that are now fathers, a determination to distance their children from the perceived negative values of their parents, their children's Grandparents.

6.3.1 The role of grandparents in shaping family values and culture

Throughout many of the boys' stories are examples of what they perceived as values, held or not held, by their grandparents. Not all of the boys had relationships with their grandparents, and at times they seemed to miss this relationship, for example when hearing about the other boys' experiences or to map their current relationship with my Mother and dad, as foster grandma and grandpa. For example, Christian reflected on his short relationship with his Mother's dad:

> But nah, I didnae really have much input from the grandparents or that … My Grandfather came about after, after I left care and then he passed away … probably after about a year and a bit, a year and a half, two years contact. So that was pretty shitty. My Mother's dad. [Christian]

Christian moved on to talk about my parents and how he saw their relationship with them and with me and as a grandchild. In particular, he started his reflection with a story about my Mother and dads' attitude towards work. I had told Christian how pleased my parents were to hear he was currently employed:

> They are amazing. I have always loved them eh… always positive and seeing the good eh. But strict … you did well and they want us to do well in life ... I dinnae want to claim a benefit because I feel like I am pure scum of the earth. [Christian]

Not all grandparent stories were positive. Both Aaron and Christian reflected on very negative inputs from grandparents. 'I had my granny and like that, but I rarely seen them. And to be honest my granny is no the nicest person. My dad's Mother, she is no very nice ... I'd say evil actually' [Christian]. Christian didn't want to expand on his paternal Grandmother's role but summed her up as the villain in his story of a dad, who also played the villain in his story. Neither of which, Christian reflected, played any decisive role in passing on family values for him. Aaron told a story about his

complicated relationship with his father, and the role models his father lacked in order to be a dad:

> I don't think there was ever a male role model in his [dad's] life. My Mother's Mother comes from the school of hard knocks, old parenting style of those kind of post war mothers, of not taking any rubbish. … my mother's mother so she grew up in slums pretty much and my grandfather was a miner, so that was the kind of style … so I don't think my Mother or Father had particularly great parenting and I think my Mother's additional needs and my dad's lack of a father figure just combined to not a great combination and he was never there. So, I guess that … I don't think that ever registered, that that was his role. [Aaron]

While Aaron's Father lacked a male role model, which seemed to lay the foundations of poor parenting for Aaron, there were examples of positive elements in his reflections about grandparents, who also saw the potential in himself. In the following extract, Aaron reflects on his Father being raised by his grandmother, as well as her role in Aaron's life as a great granny:

> … and that is when his Mother left him and left him with his great granny, his granny, my great granny and then he moved out with her and moved down to Pennywell to live with that other elderly family member. I think much of my dad's … my Father did have parenting. I think he had it in his granny who was a great woman, she was one of the very few people to believe in me from the start and was always confident that I would do well. [Aaron]

The idea/notion of passing on values across generations is a central feature of Mollenhauer's conceptualisation of upbringing.

Both Declan' and Oliver's stories were heavily influenced by the role of grandmothers in their birth family stories. Strong links to positive parental values were threaded through both reflections. Declan's stories of Nana begin with some context around her providing a safe home in the absence of his Mother and dad:

> I was in the three-bedroom house. My Nana and six grandkids, it was tight for space … Life with my Nana was a good package and the packages either side were shit to begin with and pretty tough now. Actually, the unit was good as well. [Declan]

Here Declan describes the elements and sections of time in his life as packages of people, places and events. His time with Mother was difficult, leading to him living with Nana and the coming into care after her death. When reflecting on his journey to living with Nana, after first being placed with his eldest sister Sharon, Declan critiques the social work processes involved and the decisions made on the best place for him to grow up:

> They [Social Work] need to look at kinship and go, well kinship might be the quicker, easier, better option but is this going to benefit this child and that is what they need to look at. Not cost, not anything like that. Is this going to benefit this child? And the answer in my case, looking back, I think … because I worship … to this day I worship the ground my nana walked on. She is the one idol that I look up to, to this day … she is key and influential even to this day in my life. She still influences decisions. It is nearly 15 year on … 14 years on now. [Declan]

All of Nana's perceived positive values on discipline, love and attitudes to the family were wrapped up in Declan's thoughts on his life now and then. Like Barry's reflections on how his mother withheld negative information about his father, Declan's Nana seemed unwilling to be critical of her daughter, despite Declan and his brother know bits of Mother's story:

> Me and Lewis [brother], obviously, we had had a chat, and we had had enough. We wanted to know the truth. We wanted to know why she [Mother] was the way she was, why she had done the things she had done. We couldn't get the answers we needed from my nana. [Declan]

When I asked about the relationship between his nana and his dad, Declan talked about how Father showed up in his life, long after leaving care and trying to attribute his absence to Nana:

> He passed all the blame on to Nana, which was, as you can imagine, in me and Lewis' eyes, was totally unacceptable. I now know the truth behind that and the reason he was no longer involved. My nana did get involved was because he caused harm to myself when I was younger. He threw me down a flight of stairs. At a young age. In a fit of rage. And at that moment he was told instantaneously he has got 20 minutes to pack up and get out the house or the police will be phoned and he will do time. [Declan]

The above extract was part of a broader account of how his birth family had treated one another and Declan's perceptions of family values, including honesty and truth. This recalled memory moved on to acknowledge the source of the story as a dad. As an adult, Declan met his Father at a party of a mutual friend. He had tried to locate him through social media but had not managed to track him down. Declan went on to say that his Nana was the hero in saving him from his Mother, older sister and now dad. The following excerpt also contains some problematic memories of what he felt was remorse from his dad:

> No, I didn't know he was my Father at that point. Looking back, how could you not twig that you are partying with someone called Declan [Surname] and your … one of your sons is Declan [Surname] … He was plied with a hell of a lot of drink that night, and he finally opened up. And told the truth. And I think there was genuine remorse, which is hard for me to say. But there was genuine remorse for what he had done, still doesn't excuse it. I was obviously too young to remember or to have any kind of lasting effects from it. But according to him, there were physical injuries caused by it. So, he was told to leave. The story and the way he told it, I do believe it, and I think it was the truth. And he showed remorse which isn't like him. [Declan]

Oliver's story of his Nana and Grandfather shares similar aspects to Declan as, again, they are the constants in a turbulent childhood. It is important to point out, that while all reflections around grandparents are positive for Oliver, they need to be contextualised, as the people he refers to are not biologically related:

> … with my nana and granddad, who aren't actually my Nana and Grandfather they are actually no relation … It is my sisters' and my brothers', dad's Mother and dad. But I still class them as my nana and grandfather because they, just as you did, helped me oot and have been a big part of my life. [Oliver]

In a complex family network of siblings and multiple partners for both his birth Mother and dad, Oliver navigates, and to some extent, categorises the relationships in his life, by the level of investment he feels they have made in him. Both Declan and Oliver hold their nanas as central custodians of family values; matriarchs, who pick up the

pieces of broken parenting by their daughters yet refuse to villainise them to their Grandsons.

While some grandparents held peripheral or even missing roles in the lives of some of the boys, for others, they were central characters that set out the foundations of what the boys perceived to be good family values. As with our foster family, education and employment were central to these values. I now move on to look in more detail at education and employment as values within birth families.

6.3.2 Birth family values around education and work

Four of the boys directly mentioned education and employment as values when asked about birth family. Aaron, Barry, Declan and Oliver, all made specific references, both positive and negative, about birth family, education and employment. There were some interesting constructs on what constituted a good work ethic. For example, Barry, who worked for his uncle in the family business, reflected on his uncle's financial problems, his own working hours and his Mother's perceptions of how safe this was:

> … my granny has always said, and my Mother, because this has been going on for quite a while, maybe he had financial troubles, eh, there are always saying, yeah, you better start looking for another job, sounds like you're about to be jobless soon and all I think is that, until I don't get a week's wages or until I need to look for another job, I'm going to milk this job, it's like today, I was working by myself, I finished at 11:30, and then I went to see my granny because she stays in Fife, so I was home for 12:30, and I still get paid to 4.00, no matter what time I finish still get paid, my full weeks wage anyway, and it's sort of selfish in a way again but {laughs} there you are, I'm never gonna find another job that I work two hours a week and still be paid, whatever, so it's like my Mother, like I say, she says you better start looking for another job, and I'm just like, well I'm going to ride this out while I can and then if I have to I will. [Barry]

The above excerpt has two interesting themes running through Barry's story. Firstly, it wasn't clear, nor did I find it appropriate to ask whether Barry's uncle's financial worries were in his employees' attitude to working hours. Secondly, nestled in amongst this reflection, and others in Barry's story was a subtext on survival and a 'make do' attitude towards coping with life. Barry seemed genuinely at ease with impending unemployment, and that other opportunities would present themselves if this job fell

through. Although not stated explicitly, I have recorded in the interview notes, that this reminded me of Barry's Mother; who very much typified a survival approach to looking after her boys, making ends meet but prioritising the boys' enjoyment of life any over longer-term plans. It is interesting therefore that in Barry's account, she is portrayed as worrying about Barry's employment situation.

Oliver's early memories of school were fractured and messy. In line with many house moves, he struggled to put together what educational values were from Mother:

> Yes, I moved around quite a few hooses. I don't really remember many primary schools, but Clydesway, that was the main primary school where I met most of my friends … In Dramside and roond aboot they areas. And Chris, that I go on the x-box with, he was a Clydesway and that. Clydesway, that was probably the best place, the best primary … [Oliver]

Changing school, both primary and secondary, were throughout his stories on education and family. Some of the changes were due to exclusions, and some were as a result of Mother's changes of partners and housing. Oliver did reflect on the role of his grandfather in steadying education for a while, as he intervened in exclusion from high school:

> My grandfather came in wi me, and he gave me the big chat 'you shouldn't be doing this, you shouldn't be doing that', great guy … It sunk in, but me being a hyper kind of kid, I have … I don't know, I wouldnae say … I never really got into trouble much, well I did a wee bit, but I wasnae one for getting excluded all the time, but I think it was the last time I got excluded that was when I kind of moved to my ma's and got a new school. [Oliver]

Oliver's memories on employment were almost all located in his stories of time in our foster family. This was due to his age and stage of life with us. However, there was an interesting theme running through his story on joining the army for family reasons. Oliver's older brother was in the army, and he had seen all the perceived benefits of living in the regiment; Oliver then enrolled in Army Foundation College (AFC):

> Yes, I look to him as a role model and cause he was in the army, I wanted to dae what he was daein. But obviously we are two different types, specimens. We have still got the same kind of hearts, come from the same place … I would say

> learning from my parents' mistakes really, from them no working. Seeing my brother and my sister working, so it has always been … I would probably say it is my big brother and my big sisters really, motivated me to always make sure you are looking for something or make sure you are daein something instead of no daein something. [Oliver]

In his attempts to emulate his brother's and sister's successes, not only in all that employment had to offer, but also in breaking the perceived chain of reliance on benefits as an income, modelled by his parents' situation, Oliver sought to change what he saw as the family norm and employment trajectory. In the next section, I explore this shift in family values.

6.3.3 Breaking the chain of values for the next generation

An interesting theme to emerge from the data was in the stories told by boys who are now fathers themselves. Barry, Declan, James and Oliver, all mentioned attempts or aims to create new family values or to distance themselves, and their children, from the values they felt their birth families had lacked, or in some cases, held but perhaps perceived in a deficit form. There is a range of examples of this, from health and activity to employment and education.

In the following extract, Declan is reflecting on challenging perceived values around health and activity from his birth family for his son:

> So I use that quite a lot, a part of his education. His day to day upbringing, no sugar, no sweets. Which again I learnt from here. He still obviously gets his treats, he is a kid, he is entitled to his treats, but I am firm when it comes to things like that. Luke presents his own unique challenges. He has the potential for Asperger's or ADHD, and as he gets older, and especially now he has gone into education the scope for that is clearer. He does look as though he is on the spectrum. So he presents his own unique challenges. With behaviour especially he can be quite challenging. And he doesn't mean it. He doesn't know that he is overreacting to a situation, he just sees it as a reaction. And again I use one of your techniques, which is just give him a minute, let him calm down and then instead of screaming and shouting, which I do do, and I can be quite vocal in the house, especially when it comes to cleanliness and stuff like that, in the house, Luke with his room and tidying … I let him calm down and I do what you used to do with me, sit him down, explain why I was upset, or why I am angry, what he has done wrong and then let him tell me what he thinks he done wrong. Let

> him use his own brain to work out … 'ah, I shouldn't have reacted like that daddy, I am sorry'. [Declan]

There are several layers of values embedded in Declan's memories on his five-year-old son. The context around them, from his life with Mother, needs a little unpacking. Diet for Declan was particularly unhealthy at home with Mother, and he goes to great length to reassure me that he monitors his son's sugar intake and diet at several points in his story. At the same time, he doesn't wish to appear to be mean to Luke and acknowledges the importance of treats. Declan also draws on what he sees as core values of mine that differ from life at home with Mother. Opportunities to listen, time to think and taking a non-confrontational approach seem to dovetail well with his strict values admired in his nana. I asked Declan if he felt there was anything of his father in him, and that he sees in his relationship with his son:

> No. But that is because I don't know enough to make that connection. I think … I think because I don't know enough to make that connection. If that was in reference to yourself then, yes, there are moments when I have gone 'Jeez, that is my dad', meaning yourself … … I have never been a high tempered or bad tempered individual but in certain things, or certain ways that Luke does things, you know, I can quite quickly change from talking like this to … full force shouting 'what are you doing, are you serious?' and things like that … where does that come from? Because I have never been an aggressive person. Never been an angry person … was that my dad, meaning my birth dad? [Declan]

Here Declan was talking about aspects of his character, as a dad, and where they may have come from. Traits and values, he doesn't associate with me and may have come from unknown traits in his birth father. Whether not shouting and not being bad-tempered are encompassed within values, is a complicated question. However, in my view, these behaviours come from particular values, such as respect for others and the importance of treating others well. In the quote above, they are discussed through the lens of presentation and how Declan feels a father should present himself to his son.

James, whose birth father was never part of his life, reflected on what factors, values and beliefs have shaped his relationship with his son, Chris. I asked James if he felt

there were any aspects of his fathering that may have come from his birth dad, perhaps, from what other people had told him about his birth dad:

> … I don't know, I guess I am really lucky that … I don't ever feel that I do anything because it is what you should do as a Father…I just feel that … he is my best friend; he is my little friend and we have fun. I can be quite … I can be quite strict on some things; he is super well behaved but we just have fun all the time, so I am just really lucky. I don't know it is funny … I think some are. I think some come from people like you, influences [James]

James openly reflected on what he saw as strong family values from his full-time foster carers, Lucy and David, and aspects that he felt he took from me. In this section, I have given some examples where the boys feel their values as fathers have been influenced by me as a foster father and where they feel they need to challenge values held by birth family. In the final section of this chapter, I explore the data that relates to values held by the professional cultures in the boys' lives.

6.4 The boys' perceptions of values held by the professionals in their lives

In this section, I present my analysis of the data that related to the boys' perceptions of values presented to them by the professional cultures in their lives. These data related to social work and social workers, and how the boys reflected on the values presented by the department and their key workers. There were no data generated during any of the interviews on teachers or support agencies values that would allow me to extend this section on to these professional groups. Here, I focus on the boys' perceptions of social work.

There is a wide range of experiences discussed in this section of the data. Here, I aim to tease out an interesting subtheme of the boys' perceptions of our foster family values, as supported or hindered by the department:

> Exactly, you want it to feel like a home. I understand exactly where you are coming from. And I can understand why other people would be a wee bit … at first people would be like 'what the hell?' and that, but then … it doesn't really matter because, at the end of the day, you yourself know that what you are doing is good and you are helping people. I cannae really think of a better form of helping people than being a foster carer to be honest. And I have appreciated it since I met you. [Christian]

This very complimentary account was in a discussion on what foster families mean, what they represent as family values, and how foster children can make sense of their experiences to those outside of care experienced lives. Christian's thoughts meandered a little, as he appeared to be careful of my feelings while expressing how difficult it is to explain to others, on what life in foster care means to him. He moved on talk about the tension (evident throughout his story) between loving his Mother and loving his time with us:

> … aye, it is so hard like, my Mother's my Mother ken, she wants the best for me, and you are you, and you want the best for me … I take lots of good stuff from you, ken … and how I want to be as a Father and that, but I also don't want to hurt my Mother … social work just screws things up [Christian]

When I asked if he thought social work wanted the best for him, he visibly winced, paused and responded:

> I suppose so … you keep saying you're part of it, so if you're part of it, then maybe … but it depends on the worker. As I said, some are cool others are a nightmare … they pure put the boot in and smash the family apart. What does that say about their values? [Christian]

Declan's perceptions of social work's view of family values was in a challenging memory for him. After leaving our family and reconnecting with his father, Declan's mental health declined rapidly, and he reflected on what he saw as social work not recognising his need to return to us for help. In the following extended extract, we talk about the social work department's decision not to allow him to return to us, as they perceived his mental health as a potential threat to the boys currently in place:

> … but looking back, I genuinely believe, if social work had agreed to the opportunity of me coming back here, it wouldn't have been a permanent solution, by any stretch but it would have put me back in a better head space, I would have gone back to having security, stability and support, that is reliable. And that I can trust. And for me that was half the battle of the depression. Was the security, was the support, was the trust. Cause I got to the point where I didn't trust anyone. Yourself included. No one was trusted. The only one I trusted was

> me. That was a side-effect of the depression. The paranoia that came along with that. [Declan]
>
> Yes, I recognise that. [Colin]
>
> Which made it worse. And I think if I had been given the opportunity to move back in here, it might not have completely fixed the problem, but it would have gone a long way to making things better. I know from when I was here, that if I had come back, that it would have been a case of 'right you are back, you are not sitting on your ass doing hee haw'. I wasn't allowed to do that when I lived here the first-time round. When I left school, I had two options, work or continue in education. Those were the two options that were put in front of me, and I chose to do work. [Declan]

The above extract flowed from a discussion on family values and how, we as a foster family live by them, but recognising that we, as a foster family, are part of a social work system and how life in our family related to what we see as the values of the system. Declan felt a disconnect was present, between what he saw as our family values and his membership; and an opportunity to return to the fold for support, as outweighed by risks associated with his mental health and what could happen with the boys living here under social work supervision.

In the same line of conversation with Oliver, about the extent to which he could see differences or similarities between our family values and the social work system's values, he reflected on a painful memory. At the time of the interview, his first son Steve had been taken into foster care:

> How somebody can make you feel that powerless and no even give you a chance. It is like you could have … at least, like I said, gave us a chance. I think we would have been brilliant parents to be honest. I think Claire would have been built into a great mother and a great kind of person. I think she would have … she was brilliant with baby Steve, as much as people think, she is this kind of this and that, but she was still brilliant with … she was never, ever put him at harm I would say. I think she was brilliant with him. It was just the things … If you were trying to deal with seeing your kid for two hours, three times a week, that is your kid … you have gave birth to this kid, you are no allowed to see him, you are getting valid time to see your kid, how are you going to cope with the rest of the time? You have to find a way of coping? [Oliver]

It is beyond the remit of this thesis to debate and discuss the rationale behind decisions made on why children are accommodated. I have included this extract, as it encompassed Oliver's frustration with what he perceives as barriers for him and his girlfriend Claire, and a focus by the social work system to remove and protect Steve, rather than support Oliver and his girlfriend as parents, and to keep the family together. This was a complex reflection and perception of the situation. Nestled within positive personal experiences of being in foster care for himself, versus the loss of his son and family to this same system. In sections of this part of his story, Oliver appeared guilty by this association with social work and goes to great lengths to bestow the positive aspects of his girlfriend as a Mother.

6.5 Summary and Conclusion

In this chapter, I have provided an overview and analysis of the boys' perceptions of the role of values and beliefs within the various cultures present in their lives. In the first section, I discuss the boys' perceptions of the values they felt were present in our foster family. The themes emerged in three key areas: ways of living as a family, education and employment, and opportunities and networks. In the second section, I explored and reported analysis that relates to the boys' perceptions of values and beliefs within the culture of their birth families. The themes in this section emerged in three areas; the role of grandparents in shaping family values, birth family values around education and employment and finally, data around perceptions of the boys attempts to break the chain of birth family values for the next generation. I have presented the boys' perceptions of values and beliefs in the various cultures in their lives. I now move on in the next chapter to discuss the role of everyday life, including sports, activities and common interests.

Chapter 7 - Everyday Life

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I report on my analysis of data that relates to the everyday experiences of life in our foster family, approached through the lens of the 'common third'. This is a central concept within the social pedagogic understanding of upbringing, referring to the values and cultures developed within relationships through co-produced and shared activities and interests (Cameron *et al.*, 2016; Pat Petrie & Chambers, 2009; Smith, 2012). This chapter contributes to two interconnected lines of argument within social pedagogy discourse, and which make an important contribution to knowledge

emerging in this study. Firstly, that foster carers, in a pedagogical sense, should be considered as experts in the everyday. In the process of living together, carer and foster child can work together in shared experiences to develop an everyday orientation, referred to as a lifeworld orientation (Grunwald & Thiersch, 2009). Lifeworld orientation is a facet of social pedagogy that acknowledges the importance of an individual's everyday reality and focuses on direct experiences, living contexts and life skills development (Eichsteller & Holthoff, 2011). Secondly, there is a requirement to embrace foster carers as upbringers on behalf of society (Cameron *et al.*, 2016; Mollenhauer, 2014). According to Mollenhauer, upbringing is in all aspects of human culture, including intergenerational relationships, discussed in Chapter 5, and the values and cultures shared in these relationships discussed in Chapter 6. In order to answer the research question in this study, by unpacking the boys' stories of life in our family; this chapter provides the third perspective in my discussion on upbringing. The structure of this chapter provides a focus on everyday life in our foster family and the development of our relationships through co-invested interests and activities, referred to in social pedagogy as a common third and discussed in more detail in section (3.2.2).

The findings in this chapter are reported in three sections. In the first, I give an overview of the importance of daily life in our home, through aspects such as food, cooking, pets, and traditions. In the second, I explore the role of sport, physical activity, and clubs in the development of our relationships. In the final section, I examine rites of passage, such as the importance to the boys of learning to drive.

7.2 Daily life at home

Everyday life experiences were mentioned in several of the boys' stories of their time in our family. From day to day activities, such as food and cooking and walking our dogs, to family traditions and the spaces in our home. Here I report the findings relating to these everyday experiences, both as recollections of their upbringing with me and in the way, they continue to influence life for the boys now. To begin with, I provide an overview of the data that relates to food, cooking and self-care.

7.2.1 The role of food

Food was mentioned by all six of the boys at various stages of the boys' stories. Food at home with birth family was briefly mentioned and discussed in section (5.3), here I focus on their stories that relate to us as a foster family and this can be divided into two categories. Firstly, traditions and memories associated with takeaway food and eating out and secondly memories around the role of food beyond that of sustenance.

7.2.1.1 Takeaway food and eating out

Friday night has traditionally been takeaway night in our house. For both the respite boys, Barry and James, the traditions surrounding Friday night Chinese food, were key memories:

> Actually, do you know what I drove past, and this is a memory of you, Taste Good [Restaurant], the other night … and someone is like 'is that place any good?' and I was like 'oh my god it is amazing'. They do the best … do you know, every time I go to a Chinese, because of you, I get shredded beef now. [James]

> I am really pleased I have had some impact on your life! [Colin]

> Honestly, every time, I get the same thing, and I also get seaweed because of you as well. Crispy seaweed. [James]

In the lead up to the above extract, I had asked James about key memories about living with me in respite and if any parts of that time were part of his life now. Without any prompting, James mentioned the format of our respite weekends and ran through activities we would do, which seamlessly slipped into a string memories of Friday nights and being collected from his full time foster carers Lucy and David, and then out to dinner at our favourite restaurant. It was such a strong memory for him, he became very animated as he told the story of how he recommends this restaurant to

others. Barry also mentioned the same restaurant, which remains open today. The memories of arrival for a respite weekend seemed strongly associated with memories of the food and restaurant. 'I loved that place, it made Friday night Friday night, if you know what I mean. Shredded beef, the smell of that takes me back... I've had a Taste Good [Restaurant], not that long ago.' [Barry]

For the boys who lived with me in full time placements, takeaway food seemed to present a conflict in my own values to them. My perceived focus on healthy eating seemed at odds with eating take away. There were occasions when the conflict became very real. For Declan this was captured in the following story and his recalled horror at being made to order pasta in a pizza shop:

> Every so often, when we were ordering out, for some reason you would make us order pasta from Papa Corolla's [Pizza Shop]. You'd make us order pasta; I think it was once a week. If we were doing fast-food, we go to get a pizza on a Friday, and we'd get a pasta dish or something … I think the one thing that really sticks out, is the fact, the fizzy juice arguments. That will always stick out for me. [Declan]

> You had a high consumption rate of fizzy juice when you first arrived. [Colin]

> Two to four litres a day. [Declan]

When Declan joined our family from the Stepville residential unit, he was drinking very large quantities of fizzy juice daily. This jarred a little with the house rules on no fizzy juice at all. In the process of trying to wean Declan off his love of carbonated products, he exercised his displeasure in the only method he felt he could. On the 'having your say' form, completed by young people prior to their LAAC review, Declan ensured the department was made aware of his change in diet:

> I even complained in a LAAC report [Declan]

Sugar deficient, was that not the term? [Colin]

Sugar deficiency. [Declan]

That was the only time I have ever read that on a LAAC report. [Colin]

Declan recalled this story with humour and some amusement that he had managed to use the system in an attempt to circumvent our family rules on healthy eating. For Aaron, there was a slightly different perspective on take away food. For him, memories were also of traditions and fun, but these were underpinned by less positive memories of his birth family, and what he saw as a very unhealthy diet, having to care for Mother and Father and the reliance on frozen meals:

> I never had to feed them (Mother and Dad) because we had microwave meals and there is nothing difficult there. We had this huge freezer, we had the tiniest kitchen ever but … a biggest chest freezer … a couple of metres … my kitchen was probably only about twice the length of it … so half the kitchen was just a freezer. And it got renovated. The council was renovating all the tenements so we got a new kitchen and bathroom and it is strange that I remember that … the freezer was still there … they actually … they could have put in a built-in fridge and stuff and my Mother was like 'no I want the freezer there'. Anyway, I hated having to be a young carer, it was so difficult and living with … being rebellious and I wasn't quite at that compassionate stage of wanting to help someone, I was wanting to go out and do all the things I had been deprived of. [Aaron]

The above extract in Aaron's story came during a wider discussion around takeaway food and what this meant for healthy eating in our family. He seemed to slip seamlessly back to remembering frozen food as a child and young carer. Memories and associated emotions around food were intertwined with how he saw caring, or being cared for, and even at an early age, knowing that he wanted something different. These memories also provided a platform to discuss life in our house and cooking and eating together.

7.2.1.2 Food beyond sustenance

Several themes emerged centred on our kitchen table as a space we shared and ate food together. The kitchen table was often the starting point for a story for many of the boys. For example, Declan had been in placement with me alone, with some respite visits from Barry and his brother John. Breaking the news to him that we may be getting a new full-time arrival was a key memory for him:

> I think it was over dinner. I think we had ordered food and we were eating our dinner. And you had mentioned that social work had been in touch about someone else and how did I feel about that. And well at that point I was … it was no skin off my nose at that point. I didn't mind sharing my space, I had shared spaces all my life so … one more in this space wouldn't do any harm.' [Declan]

The above excerpt starts with us eating together and how this shared activity anchors his memory in a safe space to talk and moves on to a discussion on having a new foster brother join the family. The kitchen table as a safe place to eat and talk about family news, was a common theme. The smells and memories associated with food appeared in many stories from the boys. In the following except Christian remembers the types of food, where he was, and how they made him feel:

> I loved the sound of you in the kitchen, I mind that ken, pans banging and sounds coming from the kitchen, as I was in my room or up in the snug. [Christian]

> So, I wasn't that quiet when cooking? [Colin]

> Nah, but in a good way. Smells coming up from the kitchen and knowing food was on the go and cooked rather than microwaved. [Christian]

> Were there any favourites that spring to mind? [Colin]

> Loads, lasagne, chicken curry, fajitas and fish, we always had fish at points, I remember that. Don't think I've had it since leaving here, but I loved it like. [Christian]

> Local fishmonger is good, and always steps up when I ask for chunky fillets [Colin]

> I can remember the smell even now, God that takes me back like. [Christian]

Memories of food, cooking and eating together seemed almost tangible for Christian as he spoke about them. At the time of our interview, he was navigating some challenges in independent living with money, accommodation and complex relationships with birth family members. The above discussion was then closely followed by difficult memories about his Father not providing maintenance for his Mother and this memory was also seemed associated with food:

> Child maintenance is something you have to pay. If I had bairn and I split up with the person's Mother the first thing I would be … I wouldn't even think twice about giving them money. 'Here have the money, I dinnae care'. The bairn has got clothes on its back, food in its belly and a roof over its head [Christian]

It seemed difficult for Christian to remember positive times, without comparing them to his birth family situation and how he saw the role of his father in these difficulties, whether there was a link or otherwise. For all the boys? Food was a catalyst for memories, good and sometimes bad, but seemed to be an important part of life in our family. These memories of food were closely linked with spaces, especially our kitchen table.

7.2.1.3 Seating Plans

Memories around food and its role in daily family life were also located in physical spaces; in particular the seats, and who sat around our kitchen table:

> I mean my seat at the kitchen seat, and I mean my seat. Aaron may think it's his seat, but it's mine. [Declan]

> I think there's a few that would lay claim to that seat. [Colin]

> They came after me and it's mine ... he's got visitors rights. [Declan]

In amongst this discussion on who sat where in a kitchen table seating chronology, Declan mentioned an interesting aspect I hadn't considered. Like all the participants, Declan had come home for his interview and caught up with the boys currently living with me. We had a coffee in the house before moving out to the study to do the interview. Declan had instinctively sat in 'his' seat and when challenged by Aaron, we discussed the rights to who sits where:

> Even now, today … you telling Aaron that was my seat means a lot. It means you haven't forgotten where I sit and that he knows it was once my seat. [Declan]

> I'm pretty sure there's a PhD thesis on our kitchen table seating plan, all on its own. [Colin]

> For sure. Hardly anybody I know sits at a kitchen table, in a dining room, and eats together at the same time … [Declan]

The importance of developing a sense of belonging through traditions was dominant in Declan, Aaron and Oliver's stories. The other boys mentioned the traditions around the kitchen table but didn't seem to attach the same level of importance to it. Food also played a role in traditions, discussed in more detail in sections 7.2.3.2 below. However, I now move on to discuss the important family tradition surrounding food and specifically a bacon roll.

7.2.1.4 The importance of a bacon roll

In a family tradition that spans back to my childhood and visiting my grandparents on a Sunday for lunch, we have now stepped down to the next generation. My brother, his partner and their children, and all my current foster family visit my parents every Sunday for lunch, more specifically, bacon rolls. In the lexicon of our family, 'bacon rolls on Sunday' has taken on a status or event that all my foster sons know and look forward to. Whilst I had understood the importance of this event for the current cohort of sons, I hadn't realised how important it was to the boys that have moved on, and a need to be allowed to visit and check in with this tradition. In the following extended extract, I had asked Declan about the terms he uses to describe my extended family:

> I still say … to Heather, 'I will need to go down and see my gran and have a bacon roll'. It is just easier to refer … [Declan]
>
> Bacon rolls again, they seem to come up with a few of the boys, I'm wondering if there's something more to them .... [Colin]
>
> They are an important tradition. [Declan]
>
> Why do you think that is? [Colin]
>
> I think it's one of my earliest memories of being here, that there was something that had been going on for years and I was now part of it. [Declan]
>
> It was just a bit of bacon on a roll at my folks [Colin]
>
> Yes. But it was really much more ... more about us all being together, Gav and his kids, us and your Mother and dad. Was it not, did it not used to be soup in the winter and bacon rolls in the summer? [Declan]

Now you're going back, that was my generation, with my grandparents, not sure if my folks did it. [Colin]

Must have got that from somewhere ... it was a big thing to be part of. Loads of us in the dining room, no room for any more and your Mother and Father were brilliant. [Declan]

They love the Sunday thing as much as you lot [Colin]

You can tell. Even now on a Sunday, I sometimes stop ... stop and know what you guys are doing down at your Mother and dads [Declan]

Declan, Christian and Aaron all mentioned the Sunday tradition at my folks. It seemed to have taken on a cultural value all on its own. If anything, the bacon rolls were secondary to the broader gathering and my extended family acknowledging the boys as part of our family. Christian and I were talking about my parents and without prompting the bacon rolls were mentioned:

They are amazing. I have always loved them eh… them and their bacon rolls [Christian]

Ah, the famous bacon rolls. [Colin]

I've got photos of us in the dining room on my birthday. [Christian]

Ah, the extended version of bacon roll Sunday. [Colin]

Yes, then closest Sunday to your birthday and there was always cake to follow the bacon rolls. [Christian]

We have to double up sometimes, if you share a week with someone else. [Colin]

I was always good, on my own, no sharing. [Christian]

My parents' efforts to mark birthdays for everyone, including my nephew and nieces, as well as my boys, was a strong memory for them. Something as simple as a family gathering, some food and being together and accepted unconditionally was an important memory for all the boys. The boys didn't mention any amounts of money or gifts from my parents during the birthday celebrations, and they probably weren't aware that my parents spent exactly the same amount on their gifts as those for their birth grandchildren, but I would argue that the feeling of being accepted as an equal part of the family is present in their stories around bacon rolls. Memories of home life were also closely linked to family holidays and traditions, and I now move on to discuss these.

7.2.2 Holidays and traditions

All the boys mentioned the importance of our family holidays and traditions in their time with our family. From family holidays and trips, to key dates like birthdays and Christmas; and from who sat, and now currently sits, where at our dining table. For those that had moved on to independent living, some of these traditions have moved on with them to their own families and with their own children. To begin with, I discuss the data relating to holidays and trips, and what part they played in the lives of the boys.

7.2.2.1 Holidays

In my attempts to provide the boys with what I regarded as everyday family experiences; I have always tried to include at least one major family holiday during each boy's time with our family. A major holiday would involve travel overseas and, where possible, a little further than Europe if we could afford it. For example, I've now been to Florida on four occasions, each time with a different set of foster sons. These longer-range holidays only occurred after successful negotiation of a few

barriers. Examples of some of the hurdles to be negotiated, are having to get passports for the boys, when birth parents would often object or block applications, or requests to the local authority to help fund 'once in a lifetime' holiday opportunities, seemed to be made more than once in a lifetime for our foster family as a whole. To begin with, I draw on Declan's memories of his first time on holiday and our trip to Florida:

> I loved, absolutely loved Florida. That fortnight, to this day, one of the best fortnights I have ever had. For a kid that grew up in Greyhouse with my nana and stuff, the thought of being abroad was … the thought of getting on holiday was big enough but the fact that I would get to go to the States, to Disneyland, the one place that you see on the telly as a kid and think 'that would be wicked' but we knew we would never get there. And I had accepted long before I moved in here, that places like that were way beyond my reach and I was never going to see them. Little did I know 2007, I would be on a nine-hour flight over there. [Declan]

Declan's memory of his trip to Florida is interesting as it also included some of the barriers I mentioned earlier. Declan's Mother was in prison during his time in our family, yet her signature was required on his passport application. On two separate trips to visit to gain her signature, she spoiled the application form:

> … a couple of prison visits … I remember the spoiled passport forms, trying to get that passport signed, Mum was just being a pain, she was deliberately signing outside the box … in the end we secured permission for Sarah Clark [Guidance Teacher] to sign that instead of my Mum. [Declan]

> Because you weren't going to get … [Colin]

> Yes, there was no way I was going to get abroad with us relying on my Mum's signature. [Declan]

While my study did not generate data which could provide insights on why this parent, and others, would want to deny their children travel opportunities, from my experience as a foster father, it may have been about control and the limited opportunities to exercise this in the lives of their children. It could also be that they did not want

someone else to provide these experiences for their children which they could not afford. Whatever the motivation, Declan seemed resigned to his mother's agenda and was pleased to find a way past it, through his guidance teacher.

Also apparent from Declan's story of the Florida trip is an interesting aspect of our foster family identity in systems such as airport security. Traveling internationally with children that are not your own can be challenging. Declan reflected on an incident from our arrival at Orlando Airport and navigating our family through US customs and immigration:

> I never forget you had to get the letter out when we arrived, to prove to customs agent that you were our legal guardian and you had the legal right and responsibility to take us abroad. You were dealing with the guy with the letter and me and Neil were just stood staring at his gun. [Declan]

This highlights the different challenges a vacationing foster family must deal with, compared to birth families. In addition to the customs declaration card, used prior to the current ESTA system, I also had to provide copies of the social work supervision order, a letter of introduction from the boys' social workers and to ensure the boys knew the importance of remaining calm. Declan's story about Neil, a foster son who hasn't participated in the study, and his interest in the custom officer's firearm relate to Neil's moment of misplaced humour when; in an attempt to see the gun in more detail, he announced he was going to tell the customs officer I had kidnapped him. Declan also commented on my parenting style and how I quashed any notions of Neil's joke:

> Yes, that's right. Funny but don't mess with him if you get the look. [Declan]

> My Roger Moore raised eyebrow [Colin]

> That's the one. You gave us that look, and we knew we'd screwed up. [Declan]

> Or were about to screw up [Colin]

Aaron and Oliver told stories about our family trip to Spain with Sam. In the following excerpt, Aaron and I were talking about the day to day life in our family and what parts he felt were important to him. Aaron talked about a sense of family, developed through a range of experiences, from cooking together and the shopping run, to family events, like our family holidays. Aaron recalls the planning of our Spanish holiday involved a dry run to London, as none of the boys had been on a plane before:

> It is about the stuff we are talking about. It is not just going into school in the morning, it is about scouting, it is about camping, it is about that holiday in Spain for the first time, travelling down to London together as a foster family. Doing that kind of dry run of a Spanish holiday to make sure we could all fit in a plane and be ok. It is just kind of … I enjoyed that we trip because it was the first time the four of us went away together, as a family unit, and it was leading to something quite exciting which was Spain. [Aaron]

The London 'practice' trip took on a significance of its own, as both Oliver and Aaron remembered the planning and preparation, and in their own words 'doing stuff together'. Holidays provided memories for all the boys to share with friends and which they could brag about their experiences. In both the interview for this study and on several other occasions when I've been with him socially, Declan has shared his story about his encounter with sharks in Florida:

> Excellent memories … I think one of the funniest, and I still talk about it to this day was swimming with the sharks. Going across the front and you were in front of me, we were coming up the ladder at the other end, you slipped and knocked me face to face with a hammer head shark. All you done was laugh when I came up from the water in blind panic [Declan]

The size of the infant sharks involved in a Disney water theme park were missed in the multiple recounts of Declan's story, but the structure and emphasis seldom changed when he retold it. Not only did holidays offer rich experiences for the boys, but these memories appeared to provide status amongst peer group. The boys who had taken trips with us, often talked about jealous friends in a way that made them feel good

about themselves and that allowed them to be the ones with something other people wanted for a change:

> Yes, we just got back from Spain and my mates were giving me grief about my luck [Oliver]

> Luck? [Colin]

> Yeah, they thought I was jammy for going on holiday and doing all the stuff we did. I'd been showing them pics on Facebook, while we were away. [Oliver]

> Ah, bragging a bit then [Colin]

> Got to be done [Oliver]

There was a significant amount of memories from the boys about trips and holidays. In this section I have focused on the role that holidays have played in developing a sense of family, as well as providing some small insights on the additional challenges we face as foster family when travelling. I now move on to analyse the data around traditions in our family.

7.2.2.2 Traditions

There is a string of memories on traditions running through many of the boys' stories. These memories were often linked with seasonal holidays, such as Christmas and Easter but also in daily life. In this section, I present analysis that relates to traditions that were present in the boys' stories around family life in our foster family, starting with seasonal traditions.

Christmas can be an emotive and challenging time of year in foster families. Celebrated dates and occasions provided a temporal marker for the boys to remember

points in their lives with their birth families. Some of these memories were of good times and for others they held difficult memories of neglect. At the start of my time as a foster father, I acknowledged the emotional difficulty for the boys and their families at this time of year and tried to set up short periods of contact on Christmas day. We would load up the car with the boys and gifts and try to visit all the boys' families. Declan recalled one such trip. 'It was Christmas time and you had gone around to give his family their presents and stuff and I had come around with you and you had dropped something off for James at that point' [Declan]. Declan was one of the boys who had no contact with birth family but seemed to draw some comfort in being part of this tradition. These Christmas family contact trips went on for eight years after which, perhaps due to changes in the boys in our family and their birth family relationships, I came to the conclusion that they were too emotional for all concerned and we moved to another day within the school holidays for contact. Declan also recalled a foster family tradition that remains important today. When each new son joins our family, my Mother and Father buy them a Christmas tree decoration or bauble with their name on it. *Figure 7.1* shows an example of the decorations with the names redacted.

Figure 7.1 Tradition (Christmas Decorations)

Declan recalled how important the decoration was to him and how he took his with him to his own Christmas tree and how he has adopted this tradition for his one family:

> The baubles. Our own personalised baubles [Declan]
>
> From Grandma? [Colin]
>
> Yes, I now have them on the tree. I have got my own, Heather (Partner) has got her own and Luke (Son) has got his own. [Declan]
>
> That tradition continues. When each boy arrives at their first Christmas, my Mother and Father buy them a decoration with their name on it. It is quite a nice tradition. [Colin]

> The one that I had got, the one that I have got, is the one that your Mother got me when I first moved in … I think you passed that on to me when I left. [Declan]

I buy a new decoration with their name, when the boys leave, and our tree now carries memories of all our family members. Discussion around family often also included our family pets and it is this to which I now turn.

7.2.3 Pets as part of our family

The boys' memories of our family pets were an interesting insight into the role of animals in our foster family. There has been a wide range of animal members in our family, from goldfish to bearded dragons and horses to dogs. While only Declan mentioned the horses, all the boys talked about our dogs at some stage in the interviews. Given the timespan across the twenty years, various dogs have been part of our family. Some of the boys had lived through the loss of our family pet, as well as the arrival of new ones. All our dogs have been rescued dogs from various charities and rescue organisations. For both Declan and Christian the fact that all our family were rescues of some sort was important to them:

> Part of the family … both the dogs are rescue dogs … that thing about nobody in this house is related by blood, and even the dogs have come to us from a difficult situation, to be part of our family … I liked the fact that we were all the same. The dogs had Christmas stockings, with their names on and they are part of the family. [Declan]

Declan's comments about ties and family membership, described through the dogs in our family, was a common theme to emerge. Christian also shared the same sentiments when talking about our family and how it felt to be part of it:

> It is almost for me, the perfect family, because none of us a related by blood. Even the dogs are rescue dogs. None of us are related by blood but we all have a kind of sense of … being together, like our Alton Towers trip [Christian]

Declan went on to talk about Jack and Spencer, our dogs at the time of the interviews and for some of his time when he lived with us:

> I'd describe them as part of my family. Foster brothers. They were part of the chilled thing. When you arrive at a new place and there's a dog, it's that calm thing. You can pat them and hug them and there's no judging who you are. They love you, whatever the story is. When I think about Jack and Spencer, I think about being loved. They still give that love even now, when I've come back, they still greet me like a long-lost brother. [Declan]

There was an interesting aspect to the boys' stories about the family pets. In the same way the boys were aware of, and talked about other foster sons, with whom they didn't overlap, as foster brothers, so too family pets that were not around during their stay with me were also included in their sense of who was in our family:

> I'm the worst with dates, I literally can't remember anything, I was even quite shocked when I could remember when Buddy died and when you bought Jack, any sort of date, it's past last week it's gone from my memory. [Barry]

Barry and I were talking about what he can remember of his time in respite with me. There were many stories and despite his self-proclaimed bad memory for dates, the loss of Buddy and the arrival of Jack was a time period he could recall with ease.

It was clear from the analysis that our family dogs played a key role in lives of the boys. Both as an icebreaker during first contact with our family, and as the focal point for what the boys saw as unconditional love. The dogs spanned placements and often provided a temporal thread to discussion on who had lived in our family. There were some mentions of loss and how the boys dealt with grief and the passing of one of our dogs, but the overarching theme to emerge, was the love and affection the boys got from having them in the family. I now move on to talk about sport and physical activity in our family.

7.3 The role of sport, physical activity and club membership

The role of sport and physical activity in our family was present in all the full-time foster sons' stories. Neither of the respite boys, Barry and James, mentioned sport in any detail. This may have been due to the short periods of time they spent with us in respite or my inability to act as a decision-making guardian for them in joining or participating in sports and teams. Whilst there was some mention of watching rugby together, there was no mention of taking part in sport or membership of clubs. Therefore, the analysis in this section relates only to Aaron, Oliver, Christian and Declan (although another foster son Sam who didn't take part in the research is mentioned) and can be divided into three categories. Playing sport, watching sport and membership of clubs.

7.3.1 Playing sports

There are two key sports that feature in a narrative role in the stories of our foster family, each of which has a different entry-point. Football, from the boys' past family experiences with clubs and birth family, as well as their love of the sport in our foster family, and rugby, which comes from my father and my love of the sport:

> If I had wanted to do something, you would have helped me do it. I appreciated that like. When I done like rugby and that … If you like, if I turned around … I knew for a fact that if I turned around to you at any point when I was staying here and said 'I want to do this', something that I actually wanted to do … I don't know, with the rugby and that, when I stared doing rugby and that and like when I stopped doing rugby. You didnae make decisions for me, but if I wanted to do something, then you would guide me in the right … you would give me guidance in how to do that. Giving me insight and that [Christian]

There are two interesting elements in the above extract. Firstly, Christian felt he had the capacity to ask for opportunities in sport, something that hadn't been part of his life up to that point. It isn't clear whether this lack of opportunities was down to his birth mother's limited finances or the lack of access to a sporting network that is sometimes required to access youth sport. Secondly Christian, like many of the other boys had started to play rugby when he came to live with me. He knew my love of the

sport and had attended professional games with us as a family. However here he described feeling free to choose to stop playing rugby, despite knowing how much the sport meant to me and my family. Although joint decision making was a theme that ran across all the boys' talk about sporting opportunities and participation, I am aware that rugby would not have been a first choice for most of the boys, and my love of the sport was a strong influencer on them. For example, Oliver talked about playing football for school and a team near his birth family home, but when I asked him, whilst living with us, about playing rugby he replied, '*you'll never make me posh*'. He seemed to regard rugby as a sport that was not part of his social set up and rejected it on this perception alone, rather than any sporting opportunity, ability or ease of access. Declan's access to rugby was slightly different, he loved first aid and as an active member of the St. Andrews Ambulance association was afforded opportunities to access the sport from a different perspective. 'I got close to rugby in the time I was here. I mended the injuries … on the touchline with a stretcher and a first aid kit' [Declan]. Whilst Declan didn't wish to play rugby, he loved the opportunity to share his stories about matches at clubs across the city and to have a role in the sporting discussions at home, with the boys that did play.

7.3.2 Watching sport

Whilst playing sports seemed to be an accepted and enjoyed part of our family culture for the boys, an interesting theme to emerge was the importance they attached to watching sports together. Both on the touchline watching foster brothers play rugby or football, as well as at home or in stadiums with national and club teams. As a foster family, we have been season ticket holders for Edinburgh and Scottish rugby teams for many years, and the boys discussed their memories of these events:

> I think everyone who lives here has rugby in their blood somewhere. [Aaron]

> How do you mean? [Colin]

Whether it's listening to you shouting at the TV during Scotland away games ... I always joke, I don't need to check the scores for Scotland, as I get my updates from the lounge up in my room. [Aaron]

I do get a bit involved with Scotland games. [Colin]

I love it. I even love sitting in the lounge with you, it's like being at a match. [Aaron]

You've been to games with us on the season tickets? [Colin]

A few times, I always seem to have Scouts or things on. We've been to the 1872 cup together and I've been to Scotland games. [Aaron]

The season tickets took on an unexpected role in our sporting life. I am the constant in those seats and the families around us, who do not know us by name but seem to know we are a foster family, have adopted the boys into the sport supporting fold:

I've been to a few Hibs [Local Football Team] games with the unit, but the rugby matches were different. [Declan]

Different sport obviously. [Colin]

Yeah, but different atmosphere. We sat in the same seats with the same people around us. It’s weird, we don't know their names or anything and they don't know us, but we knew each other, do you know what I mean? [Declan]

I do, the season tickets span lots of boys, so I often wonder what people think. [Colin]

Yeah, that guy and his daughter that sit next to you always offered us sweets as well. [Declan]

They've been in their season tickets longer than us; I think I did mention we were a foster family at some point. [Colin]

He even shook our hand at New Year [Declan]

We all do. [Colin]

And the new boys go as well? [Declan]

Yes, same seats, same families and the same welcome. [Colin]

For Declan and Christian who had both moved on to independent living at the time of the interview, the season tickets also seemed to be an easy access back into family life and routines. I asked Christian if he could remember coming to games with us:

Yeah, a few Scotland games, they were good fun [Christian]

Those season tickets have paid dividends over the years [Colin]

You still got them? [Christian]

Yeah, they may be a lifetime commitment [Colin]

I'd be up for coming again. [Christian]

> You should, I think it's a great tradition [Colin]

> Yeah, my mates go to football with their dads, so it was kinda the same. [Christian]

Our family season tickets seemed to offer a structure and sense of belonging for the boys. Even if they were not specifically interested in rugby as a sport, my love of it, the occasion and traditions such as chips and cheese at half time were an important part of the stories told around watching sport. Sport could also be enjoyed at home through watching games together on TV, including me watching football matches, much to the boys' amusement. Sport and physical activity also manifested itself in other organisations out with football and rugby such as membership of clubs.

7.3.3 Club and organisation membership

The analysis in this section relates to membership of sporting clubs and youth associations. In this section I focus on scouting, which many of the boys have accessed and enjoyed. Like rugby, this is an activity that my father and I have taken part in for many years and the existing network seemed to ease access and opportunities for the boys. When talking about my love of sports and scouting, Aaron reflected on the networks that existed with him and his foster brothers:

> I was thinking about if you look at present set up of Oliver, Sam and I, we each have something that is unique to us but we share with you. I don't know if you have seen this. But Oliver's love of movies I think you share with him quite well … and Sam with rugby and me with scouting. [Aaron]

Aaron goes on to talk about the opportunities for development that scouting brought him, both physical and psychological. Aaron completed his Duke of Edinburgh Gold Award during his time in Explorer Scouts. He also took part in an expedition across Iceland, which stretched his comfort margins and challenged him emotionally. He draws on the experiences from scouting in describing his development:

> we share and shared scouting and that quite a big part of my development, but I think it was more a part of my development because it was with you and it was having you in it with me and … or even not having you in it and you pushing me to do camps and stuff. I have very rarely been away from a home environment [Aaron]

As with the boys who enjoyed membership of our local rugby club and all the social networks it opens, Aaron reflected on the role of our local scout group in supporting his arrival in the area of our home and school:

> What is interesting about Johnston [area we live in], this completely relates to scouting and we can talk about it in education but … Johnston is very much, if you are in it, you are in it, if you are not, you are quite chastised. It is not very accepting sometimes. Johnston is great at accepting people, but it is very difficult if you are not like them. Whereas scouting they just accepted me. [Aaron]

Aaron seemed to feel access to the community we live in was eased by his membership of a local club. This may be indicative of the area we live in, which has a village feel about it, rather than a suburb of a city. The local children go to nursery, primary and secondary school together. Clubs draw from the same membership pool and when a young person suddenly arrives in fourth year of high school, they may feel an outsider, even if they had moved in to the area with their birth family, never mind joining an established and well known foster family in the area.

In this section, I have reported findings that relate to sports and club membership. The data suggests the boys have navigated sporting opportunities that they may not have accessed prior to coming in to foster care. These opportunities may have been a positive or a threat to existing sporting allegiances. Sporting choices seemed to have been influenced by my sporting networks and love of sports, but also evidence choice and joint decision making between the boys and me. In some cases, sport was accessed in other ways, as season ticket holders and as medics on the touchline, but in all the full-time foster care boys' stories, sports and physical activity played a role in our family. I now move on to an unexpected aspect in the data and the importance of rite of passages for the boys.

7.4 Rites of passage

As my foster care remit runs from twelve years old to continuing care, they young men in our family grow up and through key stages of development and on to independence during their time in my care an interesting theme to emerge from the data, were the boys' perceptions on rites of passages. Emerging from the analysis were two key themes, the first was the importance of learning to drive and the second was moving on. However, these emerged as two different themes, the first a rite of passage towards independence, and the second a denied rite of passage through an artificially enhanced transition to independent living.

There are no studies looking at rites of passages for care experienced young people. Research has focussed on transitions from care and on to independent living and outcomes after care, which are discussed in section (3.3.1.2). The closest I could get, were two studies reported in the USA. The first exploring the role of high school, as a rite of passage (Collinson & Hoffman, 1998). I was drawn to this study, as it highlighted the importance of learning to drive, as a 'significant new-found status for sixteen year old students' (Collinson and Hoffman, 1998 p5). Learning to drive also featured in the second study by Blumenkrantz and Goldstein (2010); but referred to this process as an ambiguous stage of life; at which point certain privileges are made alliable, such as getting married and learning to drive (Blumenkrantz & Goldstein, 2010). Blumenkrantz draws on his doctoral dissertation to provide a definition, which helps this thesis lay the foundations for a contribution to knowledge in this area:

> A modern day rite of passage is achieved when parents and the community create and participate in experiences which are perceived to be transformative by youth and, in fact, offer them increased status within the community and facilitate their healthy transition through adolescence (Blumenkrantz, 1996, p21 in (Blumenkrantz and Goldstein, 2010 p5)

Experiences and increased status for the adolescents are at the heart of the upbringing relationship, and I now move on to discuss the boys' perceptions of two rites of passages in their lives.

7.4.1 Learning to drive

Learning to drive was mentioned by several of the boys as an important stage and skill in life for them to achieve. Learning to drive is an expensive process and with twenty sons, I took the economically practical step of qualifying as a driving instructor, installing duel controls in our family car and teaching the boys who were of age and wished to learn to drive. It took a year of college courses, practical teaching lessons, a probationary period as a provisional instructor and three levels of tests to qualify as a DSA Approved Driving Instructor (ADI) (Figure 8.2).

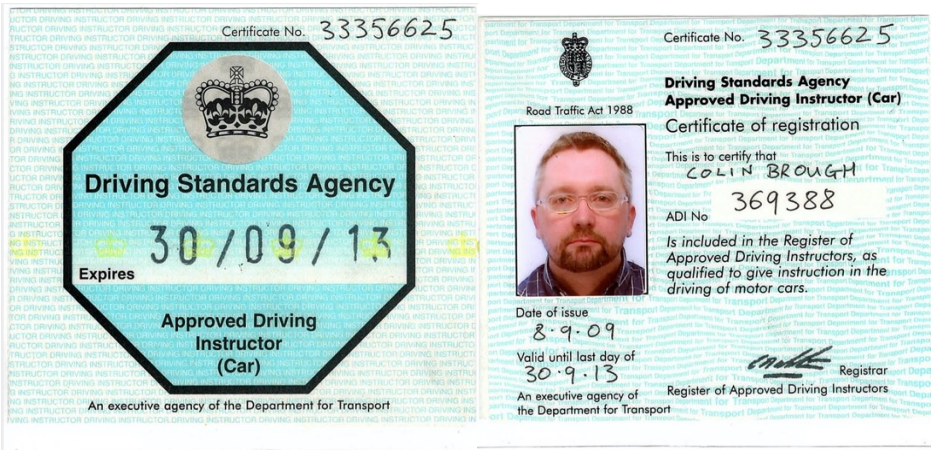


Figure 7.2 Driving Standards Agency (Instructor Certificate)

At the time of the interviews I had taught five of my sons to drive, but Oliver was the only participant in the study who had been taught to drive by me. I was talking with Oliver about a job interview with the Post Office, and he commented on how badly this had gone, which opened an opportunity to talk about the positives and gaining his driving license:

> Aye, one of the best things that has happened to me. ... biggest achievement. [Oliver]

Do you want to tell me why this was so important to you? [Colin]

I think it's important to everyone, being able to drive, freedom and that. [Oliver]

Is it something you've always wanted to do? [Colin]

Yes, my Father doesn't drive but seeing you and my mates, it was important that I did it. [Oliver]

I've taught a few of the boys to drive, in our wee driving school. [Colin]

In a quirk of the system that in order to present the boys for their tests, I had to establish a driving school in order to teach my sons. Driving schools must display a teaching license, their name and contact details, but as my only clients were my sons, we took a humorous spin on these requirements.

Figure 7.3 Driving School Car

Our driving school's only contact details were 'Only by personal recommendation', a point of humour that seemed to amuse the boys:

> It was class, our own wee driving school. When I told my mates you were an instructor, teacher and I was getting it for free in an Audi, everyone was asking me for a favour. [Oliver]

> It's an exclusive club [Colin]

> Too right, I could have kissed that examiner [Oliver]

> That's the fastest I've seen one move at the end of the test. I don't think many students ask them for a hug [Colin]

> Totally, I was so happy. It was the biggest thing so far, know what I mean. I'd achieved something on my own, well with you. [Oliver]

> It took a couple of attempts, but yes, we got there in the end. [Colin]

> No that good in school but I'm a good driver. [Oliver]

In a list of memories around difficult birth family relationships and limited successes with job interviews, Oliver talked with a sense of pride in his achievement with driving. An unhindered or tainted memory, with a successful outcome. It gave him a certain kudos amongst his birth family and friends and his route to the license through our exclusive driving school seemed to add to our relationship. There was an additional rite of passage that was mentioned by three of the participants and referred to in discussions about the other boys. Moving on to independent living, and in some cases a new family of their own.

7.4.2 Moving on to independent living

It was my intention to draw on Blumenkrantz definition of rites of passage given above, and to discuss the positive aspects in the boys' stories to discuss the social work system and my efforts to facilitate a 'healthy transition through adolescence' (Blumenkrantz and Goldstein, 2010 p5). However, this section has turned towards a rite of passage denied. In the stories of the boys who were here full time and had moved on by the time of the interviews, both Christian and Declan's accounts were imbued with difficulties and barriers to be overcome. In the following section of Declan's story, he talks about his first flat:

> Calley Street [First Flat Address] was a disaster. Obviously, I left here, gone into Calley Street full of promises and new life, new start and I don't think that was very well constructed, the way Through Care, After Care system works on that. And I have challenged that and made comments on that to social workers every time I see them … [Declan]

Declan and I talked about the limitations of the through care and after care system, and to what extent he felt supported to move out of foster care and into his own flat:

> Well obviously when I left here, moved into Calley Street, obviously it as a new experience, you had come down to see the flat and stuff, you brought me my goody bag of food to make sure I had enough to eat and stuff but I was nowhere near prepared for that. Social work made no attempt to prepare you for independent living and they believe, and I believe it is still the case today, that you move into your flat, you are given a support worker that comes out to see you and deals with you but they don't go through 'you have to pay rent, council tax, TV licence …' no one talks you through that. Not even your support worker. They don't talk you through that stuff. [Declan]
>
> Should I have done any of that do you think? [Colin]
>
> I think, looking back, if you are doing that with Oliver, I think that can only be a benefit, going through that process with him. Explaining that these bills have to be paid and the consequences of not paying them have to be explained. I have been out of Calley Street for years now and I am still tailing debt, to this day, behind from Calley Street. I think gatekeeping, needs to understand the importance of gatekeeping. [Declan]]
>
> What do you mean by that? [Colin]

> The front door. Who you let into your house? Who comes into your space? As you said, seeing parties full of people, for me, I had my own place, I could throw my own parties, stuff wasn't … I was allowed friends round, in the later days I was allowed friends round here. We were in here … by that point 17, 18, I am sure you were aware that there was nights when I was having a drink. Tried to hide it as best I could … [Declan]

Declan's story is set during a period when the legal age limits of foster care were eighteen; and his transition from foster family to his first flat were steered by the system rules, rather than any decisions on what he or I saw as right for him.

7.5 Summary and Conclusion

The findings in this section have highlighted the importance of everyday routines and activities for the boys in our foster family. The role of food, both the traditions around take away food and its role beyond that of sustenance emerged as a key memory of family for the boys. Our family holidays and trips seemed to provide an element of self-worth development for the boys, as well as providing bragging rights amongst friends and peer group. The spaces in our house, including the seating plan at our kitchen table provided a point of reference to belonging to our household and the important role of our family dogs, as uncomplicated sources of love and affection, were also key themes to emerge. The various reflections around sport and physical activity provided some interesting insights on how these contributed to a sense of belonging. The final two themes were related to rites of passage, in which the importance of learning to drive were discussed and the impacts of a rite of passage denied in moving on to independent living before a young person is ready.

In this chapter, I have highlighted the importance of shared experiences, co-developed participation in activities and the how these underpin our family values, cultures and beliefs. All three findings chapters provide an insight into the boys' experiences of upbringing in our foster family.

Next, I move on to my discussion chapter and bring together the three findings to establish three interconnected sections, each making an important contribution to

knowledge from this study. I also provide a general summary, implication, and recommendations from this study, as well as acknowledging the limitations and proving some scope for further research.

Chapter 8 - Discussion

8.1 Introduction

Prior to commencing my PhD research, I had often wondered, as a foster father, how my sons made sense of their lives in care, both to themselves and to others outside our family. Comments on how similar Declan and I looked - 'a chip off the old block', or requests to 'ask your father if you can play rugby', were more easily managed by not correcting people; but how did my sons manage assumptions, expectations and misunderstandings by others about them and our family? The aim of this thesis was to explore the stories told by the boys, in order to understand what an upbringing in my care meant to them. My review of the literature on empirical studies exploring the views of children in foster care (Chapter 3.3), highlighted a predominance of studies looking at maintaining contact with birth family, educational and mental health and a quantitative focus on outcomes after care (Balsells *et al.*, 2015; Quest *et al.*, 2012). There were no studies exploring the views of foster children making sense of their experiences, whilst being raised in foster care. The only other perspective, was a predominance of accounts of approaches to raising children in care, developed through theories of attachment, see (Smith *et al.*, 2017) for critique. Whilst an awareness of attachment may have something to offer on children's experiences, the findings from this study suggests that standard accounts of attachment did not feature explicitly or implicitly in accounts from the boys on life in our foster family. Alternatively, concepts such as the importance of an experiential education on everyday life, fluidity in relationships and an ability to talk about their life in care from a positive, rather than deficit perspective, were central to the stories told and constitute the three sections in this thesis. In this chapter I discuss the findings within the context of the available literature and then move on to discuss the implications for policy, practice and further research. I close this chapter with my reflections on the thesis' overall aims and the PhD journey. I now move on to the first of these sections and my discussion of education in its broadest sense through everyday life experiences.

8.2 Upbringing: Education in its broadest sense

In addition to the literature reviewed in Chapter 3, an analysis of my data in the previous chapter showed the importance of everyday life in foster care emerging as an important aspect of the boys' experiences. There is a dearth of literature on this topic, and in the discussion of these findings, I draw on the relevant literature where it exists. I have structured this section around three key areas of the boys' upbringing. Firstly, I discuss daily life and the shared experiences, between the boys and I, that inform my discussion on education in its broadest sense. Secondly, I discuss the role of physical activity and sports in our relationship and how the values and beliefs we share around these were central to the boys' sense of belonging and of family identity. Finally, I discuss an interesting theme to emerge from the data on the role of rites of passage, both negative and positive. To begin with, I discuss daily life at home and the processes involved in daily life in our foster family.

8.2.1 Shared daily living in our foster family.

In this section I have drawn on the findings from Chapter 7 to help me develop a sense of what an upbringing in our family, by me, meant for the boys. I discuss the role of food beyond sustenance, family pets and physical activity and sports, in our shared family experiences.

8.2.1.1 Food

To begin with, I discuss the role of food and draw on the findings in section 7.2.1 to establish the importance of food, as a catalyst for memories of places we've eaten together and the food we've shared, as well as traditions associated with food. Kohli *et al*'s study explored the importance of food for asylum seeking children in UK (Kohli, Connolly, & Warman, 2010). This concluded that food played an important part in helping develop a sense of belonging for children growing up in care in a new country, and in bridging past and present experiences. Although Kohli *et al*'s work was with asylum-seeking children in UK foster care, I would argue that their findings

are likely to be transferable, at least in part, to resident children growing up in foster care. The findings in my thesis demonstrated a strong link between food and belonging and extend Kohli et al's work by discussing the role of food in young person adopting new family values and adding to an ability to talk about positive care experiences. These findings are echoed in a study by Rees *et al*, exploring the relationship between food and mealtimes, and settling in to a new foster family (Rees, Holland, & Pithouse, 2012). Rees *et al's* study is of specific interest as it also highlights the importance of, not only food for foster children in the development of relationships, but the part that eating together, table manners and food intake can play in 'othering' them from existing family ways, sometimes in a deficit way. The boys who contributed to this thesis often talked openly about mealtimes, cooking together foods they liked; these memories were positive and cited in stories of their own values, and for those that are fathers now, in ways of living with their own children. The boys also drew on stories of Chinese restaurants and Friday night traditions of take away food to talk about their experiences in our family. When talking with others, the ability to recommend a restaurant to others seemed an important part of their stories.

A sense of belonging, developed through food, also extended to the spaces we shared, such as our family home and kitchen table. Wilson and Milne (2013) drew on Winnicott's transitional objects to establish an understanding of the importance of physical objects, such as books and bikes, and to some degree personal spaces in the development of belonging (Wilson & Milne, 2013; Winnicott, 1971). The boys in this study talked about the seats at our kitchen table, and of who had sat there before. Perhaps of even greater interest were the stories of the boys who had moved on to independent living and an ongoing sense of ownership for them, of that space and seat; and that the current person sitting there was merely custodian. This small detail, within a story about food, demonstrated the important part that physical spaces play in feeling part of a family unit. This also extended to our wider foster family network and traditions located in Sunday lunch with my parents, discussed in section 8.2.1.4, which also demonstrated the important part that links food, spaces and traditions. This significance of this tradition to the boys is summed up in Declan's comments about still being able to come for Sunday lunch, long after he had moved on. 'I think it's one

of my earliest memories of being here, that there was something that had been going on for years and I was now part of it' [Declan]. Links and claims on common histories were important, especially if they were positive, enriching, and allowed for family membership to be perceived to continue. I will return to this idea of belonging and family in my implications and recommendation section 8.4 below, and care stories not located in deficits. In addition to food, our family dogs also emerged as an important part of everyday life in our family.

8.2.1.2 Pets

Holland's study explores the ethics of care for social work, through a concept of 'wider networks of care relationships' that can permeate society (Holland, 2010). Holland's study was a small scale qualitive project with the research question 'How do children and young people who are care experienced understand, negotiate and wish to express their everyday lives and identities?' (Holland, 2010 p1668). Eight participants, living in either kinship or foster care, generated data that helped Holland to plot sources of the participants' care relationship.

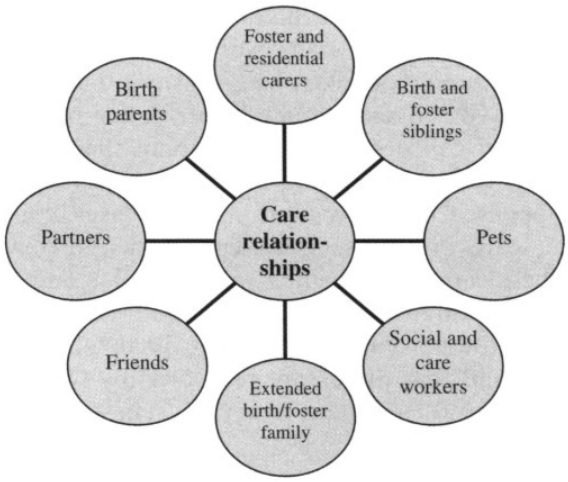


Figure 8.1 Holland's Network of Relationships

Figure 8.1 shows Holland's network of relationships in which pets featured strongly. In particular dogs in foster and kinship families, as a source of positive relationships (Holland, 2010). The findings from this study in section 7.2.4 showed, not only the

significance of the dogs as a source of positive relationships, but the important role our dogs played in developing a sense of family. From their role as an icebreaker in those early first meetings between the boys and I to acting as a point of reference in talking about our family as a collective not related by blood, the dogs offered a source of unconditional acceptance, as well as a potential outlet for affection, when this could be perceived as complicated with humans unrelated to the boys. Holland points out that human-animal relationships are an important and growing area of interest for sociologists 'but feature less strongly in the literature on children's care, although this finding will not be surprising to practitioners in the foster-care arena. Relationships with pets give the possibility to care for and be cared about, and close, physical contact.' (Holland, 2010 p1672). This thesis adds further empirical knowledge to this area and suggests pets can play a pivotal role in establishing belonging and family for young people in care. I now move on to discuss physical activity, sports and clubs that both adult and young person have an equal interest and co-productive investment in, also defined within social pedagogy as a common third (Cameron *et al.*, 2016; Pat Petrie & Chambers, 2009; Smith, 2012).

8.2.1.3 Physical activity and sports

Unlike the other sections in this chapter, there does appear to be a distinct, and to some extent, growing body of literature on physical activity and sports (PA & S) in the lives of children in care (Fong, Schwab, & Armour, 2006; Murray, 2013; Quarmby & Pickering, 2016; Safvenbom & Samdahl, 1998; Säfvenbom & Samdahl, 2000; Skouteris *et al.*, 2011). Some of these studies look at links between obesity and living in care and ultimately links to deficit health outcomes, such as diabetes, hypertension and heart disease (Murray, 2013; Skouteris *et al.*, 2011). Others explore how young people in care use their free time and report that those in care had significantly fewer self-involving activities (Safvenbom & Samdahl, 1998), and suggest the importance of interventions to enhance leisure opportunities for those in care (Säfvenbom & Samdahl, 2000). During my review of the literature in this area, Thomas Quarmby's research appeared consistently within the searches, as meeting both criteria for PA & S and care experienced children (Dagkas & Quarmby, 2016; Quarmby, 2014; Quarmby & Pickering, 2016):

> Little is known about whom the key social agents are that could influence children in care's engagement with PA through modelling or providing support and encouragement, though friends, social workers and foster carers may play a particularly important role (Quarmby & Pickering, 2016 p785)

Directly responding to Quarmby and Pickering's observation on a lack of awareness on whom the key supporting 'agents' are, for care experienced young people in PA & S (Quarmby & Pickering, 2016), this thesis provides knowledge on the role of the foster carer, as 'agent', or upbringer in this area. Beyond the existing and growing body of literature on PA & S for care experienced young people, this thesis also adds a new and interesting dimension to the existing knowledge; not only does playing sport play a role, but both watching and supporting sport were important parts of the development of our, the boys and I's, relationship. Firstly, as part of our daily lived experiences at home and watching sports together on television, but also as part of an interesting network of shared interest. Our rugby season tickets seemed to hold a greater value than the cost of a seat to watch rugby. For the boys in this study, the season tickets offered tradition and a sense of belonging, even if they were not specifically interested in rugby, the occasion of sitting together in the same seats year after year, the food we shared at matches and the community of other season ticket holders sitting around us was an important part of their sporting stories. Beyond sports, and specifically rugby, were other physical activities and clubs. Scouting played, and continues to play, an important part in Aaron's life.

There is a developing line of discussion in the social pedagogy literature on the role of youth clubs and youth groups in the lives of care experienced children, as well as an increased discourse within academic discussion on club activities and well-being for care experienced children (Fong *et al.*, 2006; Murray, 2013). Here, I draw on Aarons' story as an example of a shared activity that not only helped develop our relationship, but also opened a network of possibilities for Aaron. Both Aaron and I shared scouting as a common interest and my scouting network, quickly became his; as he built on this to achieve awards, such as his Duke of Edinburgh Gold and his Explorer Belt. Both achievements were key parts of a story about growing up in care that was grounded in

positive rather than deficit accounts. Membership of our family was closely linked with membership of various family networks, whether it was sport or youth group and clubs, our networks offered both belonging and a developing sense of history together.

Collectively, physical activity, sports and clubs provided tangible examples of common third activities. Often negotiated between the boys and I, whether participating or watching together, these activities provided something through which our relationships were developed. Whether this was driving the length or breadth of Scotland on a Sunday morning to watch and support the boys taking part in sport or checking in with our fellow season ticket holding supporters at club and national rugby games, sport played a large part in establishing their part in our family identity. Organisations, such as scouting, also offered this shared interest and the important opportunity to access networks that the boys found useful and enriching. I now move on to the third section to emerge in the process of the study into everyday education. The process of rites of passage emerged in the boys' stories.

8.2.2 Rites of passage

In this section, I draw on the findings discussed in section 8.4 and the rites of passage for the boys. Here, I draw on Blumenkrantz' definition of a rite of passage as the facilitation, by parents and the wider community, to create and participate in experiences that are perceived by adolescents as contributing towards increased status (Blumenkrantz & Goldstein, 2010). In the process of my analysis, it emerged that there were two key themes on rites of passage in the boys' stories. One was a positive aspect in the boys' stories around learning to drive, and the importance of this in terms of self-worth; and the other was the emergence of what should have been a positive rite of passage but highlighted some inadequacies in the aims of the social work system and myself to prepare the boys for independent living. I begin with the second of these.

In section 7.4.2, I identified a theme around the challenges of an artificially accelerated transition on to independent living. For two of the boys, who had been with me in full time care and had left by the time of the interview, their experiences of moving on

from our family were bound by rules and legislation around the end of care age limitations rather than a natural and mutually agreed, between the boys and I, transition on to independent living. In section 3.3.1.2 on outcomes after foster care, I discussed the importance of a mentor or ally in supporting youths transitioning from care to independent living (R. Jones *et al.*, 2011; Quest *et al.*, 2012). The findings from this thesis provide empirical evidence of the frustrations and anxieties for adolescents in care, associated with an enhanced early transition to independent living and demonstrate the need for continued support from adults in the upbringer role, both in material and emotional support. Both the existing body of literature on outcomes from care and the evidence from this thesis demonstrate the need for the role of an upbringer to remain part of care experienced young people's lives after a care placement has ended and both parties remain co-invested in that relationship. Drawing on Blumenkrantz' definition of rites of passage, we (the social work system and I) had not facilitated a healthy transition through adolescence to independence for at least the two boys in this study. Indeed, it felt like a rite denied.

A closer approximation of Blumenkrantz' definition of a rite of passage, was the account from Oliver on learning to drive. At the time of the interviews only Oliver, from amongst the participants, had been taught by me to drive and had passed his test. There were some interesting aspects to emerge in his story. Firstly, the importance of learning to drive as a milestone he had thought may be beyond him, in terms of finances and opportunity; and secondly, learning to drive was a very explicit example of a common third activity, which provided a skill for him and developed our relationship. The establishment of our own driving school, the bragging right this school and passing his test gave Oliver, amongst his peer group; and the increased sense of status for adolescents, described by Blumenkrantz, all added to another aspect of positive experiences that he could talk about. I appreciate that it unrealistic to expect all foster carers to qualify as driving instructors, in order to teach their foster children. However, given the perceived importance of learning to drive, both as a rite of passage in adolescence and as an employability skill, there is scope to explore whether the local authority should address funding for this, in the same way that they may fund further education through care bursaries and educational maintenance allowances. Indeed, if

further education is not the pathway chosen by a young person in care, a more flexible approach to funding skills development could enhance the transition from care to independent living and provide a range of possible rites of passage for care experienced adolescents. I now move on to draw together the elements of an education in the everyday, from the perspective of the boys in this study.

8.2.3 Section Summary

In my review of social pedagogy and theories on upbringing 3.2.3, I posited two aspects of the role of a foster carer, identified by researchers exploring upbringing in foster care (Cameron *et al.*, 2016). Firstly, in matters of everyday life, foster carers should be thought of, in a pedagogical sense, as experts in the everyday (Cameron *et al.*, 2016). A focus on everyday orientation by foster carers for the children they raise, can be considered as part of a lifeworld orientation (Grunwald & Thiersch, 2009), which acknowledges the importance of an individual's everyday reality and focuses on direct experiences, living contexts and life skill development (Eichsteller & Holthoff, 2011). The findings from this thesis provide empirical evidence, from the boys' perspectives, on the important role of everyday life activities, as presented to them by me, as their foster father and upbringer, which in turn can help to define my role as an expert in the everyday. Secondly, in order to deliver this expertise in everyday life, it is necessary to consider a foster carer as an upbringer on behalf of society (Cameron *et al.*, 2016; Mollenhauer, 2014) and, in doing so, develop our understanding of the methods of raising children who are under the care of the state. Again, the evidence from this thesis demonstrates the multifaceted role of a foster carer in working with young people, and the systems that surround them. Indeed, this form of agency as upbringer requires the subtle handling and management of society's expectations and hopes for children and young people in its care; whilst also committing to a genuine relationship with the young people and their hopes and desires. Both aspects reframe foster care away from psychologised perspectives towards a notion of the everydayness of lived experiences. I now move on to discuss the various individuals that could be considered upbringers by the boys.

8.3 Upbringing: A process of negotiated relationships with upbringers

In this section I discuss the crucial role that relationships play in the daily lived experiences of the boys in this study. In Chapter 3, I reviewed literature on upbringing, as a central concept in social pedagogy, identifying it as a relational process for young people growing up in foster care. In this section, I provide a focus on relationships and the significance of fluid and flexible relationships for the boys. Birth and foster family networks, as well as the professional relationships in their lives, such as with social workers are discussed through the young men's reflections on the people in their lives and the part they have played in their upbringing.

In the process of this study, I have become aware of the key actors within the boys' stories and from their accounts of life within our family, I have concluded that a range of people can play an upbringing role in the lives of children in care. This echoes (Cameron *et al.*, 2016) study which identified two groups of upbringers for children in care, carers and birth family are the first group, and social workers were the other. It is important to acknowledge that all three sets of upbringers may have potentially conflicting or competing sets of values:

> Upbringing is characterised by the pedagogical relationship, which is not only acknowledged by the upbringer and the one being brought up, but also by the surrounding society. So, upbringing in foster care is influenced by two systems of upbringers, the foster family and the biological family, whose values and customs may differ, and somewhere in between are professional social workers who have also their system of values (Cameron, Reimer and Smith, 2016 p167).

My findings suggest foster and birth families may hold conflicting or competing heritages they wish to pass on to the next generation. In this section, I argue that nestled within this potential tension on values presented to the boys are aspects of choice and levels of control. The boys' accounts hold examples of fluid and informed decisions on who is and isn't important to them, in order to get by in life. They do so with a level of autonomy and empowerment that is not realised in many other aspects of their lives and that this aspect of control, on who their upbringers could or should be, challenges the more established perspective on secure, avoidant or ambivalent forms of

attachment (Bowlby, 1969), so heavily relied upon in discourses around care experienced young people. Critical readers may rightfully question the levels of decision making available for young people in choosing a foster carer or social worker, as systems seldom offer choice. This is not my intention with my claim; indeed, the statistics on foster care placement breakdown suggests the upbringing relationship cannot be forced or created. Here, I suggest the choices on whether a foster carer or social worker can become an upbringer are negotiated by both parties in the formation of their relationship. This is an important aspect on upbringers that I will return to in section 8.5 and the recruitment of foster carers. In addition, I suggest that acknowledging the importance of autonomy and decision making for young people, could add to the knowledge generated by Goodyear's study on understanding how children in foster care make sense of their experiences coming into care (Goodyear, 2016), particularly for adolescents.

To begin with, I discuss my role as upbringer, and aim to answer the questions raised in Cameron *et al*'s (2016) study, around 'the challenges of upbringing in foster care' (p166). These challenges are in areas such as the language used in a care family, and words like 'dad'.

8.3.1 My role as upbringer

At the start of section 5.2 and my analysis of the data relating to my role as the boys' foster father, I offered some reflexive caution on the often-positive nature of the boys' comments about me, as their foster father. This caution is also applicable to discussion of my role as upbringer. I now move on to discuss the development of my role as primary carer and upbringer for the boys.

To begin with, and in response to the first of Cameron *et al*'s challenges on upbringing in foster care and navigating family life as part of both foster and birth families, I address the role of language. In section 3.3.2.1, I reviewed the existing literature around the language of family and concluded three key areas that relate to discourses around the lived experiences of children growing up in foster care. Firstly, the

importance of not trying to normalise 'ordinary family' in positive terms and therefore reify a 'care family context' as deficit. Secondly, the need to be aware of and acknowledge the role of policy discourses in shaping the language used within a foster family and by foster children and thirdly to embrace and acknowledge the fluid nature by which foster children can navigate the emotional and symbolic construction of their everyday experiences through language and aspects of autonomy in decisions around who their upbringers should be. Language and meaning making is discussed in greater detail in section 8.4 below.

The findings reported in section 5.2 on the boys' perception of me as their foster father, demonstrated the important role of modelling positive parenting and that this model of fatherhood must include a capacity to listen and talk openly, which seemed at odds with the boys' experiences of their birth fathers to date. Even with Oliver, whose birth father still played a role in his life, this co-investment in time to talk and in activities was absent in his story. Modelling the good in my life to my foster sons is at the heart of Mollenhauer's concept of upbringing in social pedagogy and the presentation and representation of my values and beliefs is central to my role as upbringer. There are perhaps blurred lines between both presentation, which involves habitual, implicit and natural ways of sharing my values and belief; and representation which requires planning, forethought and technical expertise (Cameron *et al.*, 2016; Mollenhauer, 2014). To that extent, aspects of presentation or representation of my values and beliefs around education, as my sons experienced them, were not explicit in their stories. However, from the findings in section 6.2.2 on educational and work values, the boys' accounts identified examples of my values in their lives. For example, Aaron's story about his time in University were developed through his experiences of life in our foster family. Modelling opportunities, opened by higher education, hadn't been within his network whilst with his birth family, 'University was never … it was always a kind of circle away'. The links between parents who attend University and the children who can access University were also present in James' story, as he reflected on his motivation to choose marketing 'so I cut out the logo of the University of Dyson and I had it in my wallet for about ten months'. Drawing on my previous roles in marketing and memory associated with me keeping a picture of a car I had wanted in

my wallet; James' story was threaded through examples presented to him whilst living with me. There was also a difficult discovery that the boys were aware of the external influences from systems such a social work, and the limitations presented by placement timescales in our family. Oliver had reflected on what he saw as a missed opportunity in not joining our family sooner:

> I wished I'd come earlier, you know, like Sam and Aaron [foster brothers], and had those opportunities in school and stuff, like … I think I would have had better grades and stuff … well I wouldn't say grades, but I would have better schooling, probably [Oliver].

Educational values were a strong and common theme running across the boys' stories and accessing my networks and opportunities was also an aspect of life in our family that emerged as important. I discussed the data relating to the various networks involved in my life and the level or extent to which the boys accessed these in 6.2.3. Networks were organisations that I was part of, such as scouting and rugby, but also related to people I knew. During the interviews and discussion around networks, stories inevitably led to accounts around opportunities presented to, and often seized by, the boys.

In this section I have discussed my role as upbringer, as perceived by the boys, and have done this through the limited existing body of literature. Key to our relationship was a perceived genuine interest in them, their birth families and their futures. It emerged from the data that the success of our, the boys and my, relationships was in due in part to the commitment to them and my efforts not to replace an existing family member or role but create my own relationship with them. I discuss family models and belonging in more detail at the end of this chapter. I now move on to discuss the role of birth family in the upbringing of the boys.

8.3.2 Birth family in the role of upbringers

The literature reviewed in section 3.3.1.1 suggested existing studies have focused on maintaining contact and relationships with birth family whilst in care (Baker *et al.*,

2016; Burgess *et al.*, 2010). In this section, I aim to add a new dimension to our knowledge by exploring the role of birth family as upbringers in the lives of children not currently in their care. Whilst the birth families may not have played a day to day caring role in the lives of their children, birth family heritage, in the form of values and beliefs, were present in the boys' stories throughout the interviews.

In Section 5.3 on the boys' perception of birth family relationships and section 6.3 on birth family values and cultures, it emerged that there were two key sets of characters in their accounts, mothers and grandparents. Fathers, either by omission in the stories, or indeed in the lives of the boys themselves, did not feature in my analysis of birth family as upbringers. It is important to remember that in all the stories told by the boys, their fathers' version of events remains unheard. I also acknowledge that birth siblings also played a significant role in the stories told and upbringing for some of the boys. For some of the boys the age and stage of their siblings could have been considered another generation, Declan for example, was in the care of his older sister for a short period. However, only data from Declan and Oliver showed a small insight on the role of siblings as potential upbringers, and this data was insufficient in order to develop a meaningful theme within upbringing relationships around older siblings. This was specific to these two boys and may not apply to older siblings in caring roles in other care settings, who may well hold the role of upbringer for younger siblings. For this reason, I focus on the boys' mothers and grandparents as upbringers.

8.3.2.1 The boys' mothers as upbringers

To begin with, the boys' mothers as a central character in birth family relationships for five of the six boys, is discussed and an argument for her role in their upbringing is developed. Apart from Declan, the boys' mothers were mentioned in many stories about life at home. Drawing on Thomas *et al*'s (2017) study, I suggest the boys saw their relationship with their mothers, and being part of our foster family, as part of a complex web of relationships (2017). Navigated through Thomas' concept of permanence, as a belief that family is a biogenetic connection; and their experiences within our foster family, through Thomas' concept of performance, as a process of tolerance, unconditional love and the transformations that take place in living together

(Thomas *et al.*, 2017), the boys developed fluid and flexible approaches to constructing what Thomas calls 'doing family' (p246). Whilst the boys' mothers were not part of our day to day lives, my role as a single male carer did not present any conflict in roles for the boys, which allowed their mothers to retain a form of parental role, albeit from a distance. To what extent the boys' mothers can be regarded as upbringers needs to be viewed through a central tenet of social pedagogy on relationships. Mollenhauer states that in order for the transmission of cultural values to take place, a secure relationship must exist between young person and adult (Mollenhauer, 2014). Social pedagogy also requires that the upbringer 'is acknowledged in this capacity by the wider society' (Cameron, Reimer and Smith, 2016 p165). To what extent this tension can be unpacked within the social work decisions or grounds for accommodation is beyond the remit of this study. Here, I argue that the boys' perceptions of their mothers' values and beliefs is imbued throughout their accounts of their lives with me. Together, both mother and I provide a section of the complex web of family that allows the boys to 'do family' (Thomas *et al.*, 2017). The other central characters to emerge as key in the boys' upbringing, was their grandparents.

8.3.2.2 The boys' grandparents as upbringers

When exploring the tensions between foster and birth family values, an interesting aspect emerged from the findings on the role of grandparents and their values and beliefs. In many of the boys' cases, grandparent values seemed to supersede birth parents and were more closely aligned with my own. One step or generation away from the issues and chaos that may have brought them into care, their grandparents' values were often reflected upon by the boys when talking about my parenting style. In section (5.3.2) I discussed the findings that related to the boys' perceptions of their grandparents. Whilst not looking at children in care specifically, Noriega *et al*'s study demonstrated the important role of grandparents as socialising agents for their grandchildren through value transmission (Noriega *et al.*, 2017). In section (6.3.1) I reviewed and discussed the data relating to the boys' perceptions of their grandparents and introduced an interesting insight on the role of my parents as foster grandma and grandpa. For example, following on from my discussion on my education values in the previous section, Christian mentioned my parents' values, as passed through me

and in his views on doing well in life, and yet another example of the importance of presentation to the younger generation:

> They [My Parents] are amazing. I have always loved them eh… always positive and seeing the good eh. But strict … you did well and they want us to do well in life [Christian]

There was no specific mention of grandparents and values in my review of literature on contact and family relationships for children in foster care, discussed in section 3.3.1.1. Not all of the boys had a positive association with their grandparents, for example, Aaron had reflected upon the fact that neither his mother or father had 'great parenting' skills, which he cited as a contributing factor to his parents' inabilities as mother and father; and Barry's accounts of his grandfather's attempts to manipulate his brother through money. However, on balance across the findings, grandparents had played a significant role, both as custodians of birth family values and belief, and sometimes, challenging birth parent values and beliefs in attempts by the boys to break a perceived cycle of poor educational, employment and social outcomes. Perhaps more directly addressing Cameron *et al*'s (2016) challenges around upbringers as altruistic, grandparents contribute to the boys' upbringing for their sake of the boys alone, without renumeration. I now move on to third set of adults in the boys' life and discuss the potential role of professionals as upbringers.

8.3.3 Considering professionals in the role of upbringers

Cameron *et al*'s study highlighted two potential groups of upbringers, foster and birth families were the first and professionals were the second; although they refer specifically to social workers (Cameron *et al.*, 2016). In sections on the boys' perceptions of the professionals in their lives 5.4 and on their perceptions of the values held by these professionals 6.4, I gained insights on key characters that the boys perceived as going beyond their professional roles to invest in them as individuals and share their values with them. The data and emerging theme on the importance of negotiated relationships for the boys in this study, suggests there is a wider group of adults that could be considered in the role of upbringer. All the boys had at least 'one

good guy' story to share about a professional in their lives the boys felt had invested in them. In addition to Cameron *et al's* suggestion that social workers may fit aspects of the upbringer role, and indeed the data from this study demonstrates that some of the boys did see their social worker relationship in this role; the other adults to emerge from the boys' stories, were teachers, sports coaches, and agency workers, such as Aarons' CAMHs counsellor Susan.

A common theme to emerge in the stories from the boys, were notions of stretched roles, or going beyond their perceived role as a teacher or coach. This is interesting on two fronts. Firstly, that the boys identified this stretching of role as a relationship, not as a client or patient and drawing on technical language or terms to describe them; and secondly, that the boys talked warmly and openly about these adults as they perceived them as almost separate to the education, sport, or medical systems that they were associated with. If altruism and a genuine approach to relationships are to be considered aspects of an upbringer (Mollenhauer, 2014), then the findings from this study suggest there is the potential to widen the net to explore other adults that care experienced young people identify as important to them. I discuss this in more detail in my implications and recommendations section 9.5.

8.3.4 Section Summary

In this section I have discussed the limited existing relevant literature on upbringers for children in care. I have drawn on the findings in this study to demonstrate the concept that the boys play a crucial role in navigating who is and is not a potential upbringer in their lives. I started with the development of my role, as primary care provider and upbringer of the boys, and identified the important role of compassion, listening and commitment play in the development of my relationship with the young people growing up in foster care with me. I then moved on to talk about the important role that the boys' mothers still play in their lives and the extent to which her values can play an active role in our foster family experience. Within the role of birth family as upbringers, I have added a specific focus on grandparents, who were custodians of family values that birth parents may not have been seen to uphold.

Perhaps the most significant contribution to knowledge on the discourse around upbringers, is the findings from this study demonstrate the capacity and levels of agency for the participants, when deciding who may or may not be considered by them, as an upbringer in their lives. While this is not a theoretical thesis and the aim the thesis was not to develop social pedagogy writing, there may be some contribution to the theoretical understanding of social pedagogy, as my findings show that, for the young men in this study at least, it makes sense to talk to a much wider group of adults as upbringers than has been previously suggested (Cameron *et al.*, 2016; Mollenhauer, 2014).

8.4 Upbringing: Moving towards new meanings in the language of care

In this section, I discuss the role of language and its meaning for the boys in this study, and how they fluidly renegotiate meaning in order to talk about their lived experiences in care in positive and less stigmatising ways. Drawing on my review of the existing literature on the language of family in section 3.3.2.1, and my analysis of the findings on the boys' perceptions of me as their foster father in section 5.2 and on their perception of foster family values and cultures in section 6.2, I uncovered an interesting subtext in the boys' stories. Within their accounts around our relationship and the language used within our family and with others, was a theme on a need to be able to talk about their life and experiences in positive terms, rather than that of perceived deficit perspectives of other people and systems, such as social work and education. In this section, I discuss language and meaning from two perspectives. Firstly, the role that policy and practice discourse plays in unintentionally propagating stigmas around life in care; the evidence from this thesis adds empirical knowledge to a theoretical line of argument in the academic literature on the need to shift this discourse from reifying 'ordinary' or 'normal' families based on assumptions of what family life 'should look like' (Boddy, 2018; Ribbens McCarthy, Gillies, & Hooper, 2019). Secondly, the need to develop a better understanding of the vital role that language and meaning can play for young people in making sense of their upbringing in care, for themselves and to others. I begin with the language of care in policy and practice.

8.4.1 Policy and practice discourse

In this section, I discuss this thesis' contribution to a developing line of argument that aims to challenge the potential impact of policy and practice discourse on marginalising the experiences of young people in care (Boddy, 2018; Sarah Wilson *et al.*, 2012). A discourse that privileges 'normal' or 'ordinary' family and potentially diminishes the lived experiences of young people in care, that may sit outside of these perceived norms (Boddy, 2018). Across the three findings chapters, language and its use and meaning emerged as a key aspect on how the boys made sense of their lived experiences. The boys often drew on social work and institutional terms in their daily life, such as 'contact' and 'permanence', when talking about seeing mum or remaining within our family until adult life; the boys' frustrations at the stigma attached to this form of language was evident in their stories throughout the data. Forms of institutional language had been used around the boys in daily life and it emerged that, for them and myself, it was often less complicated to ask the social workers when contact with mum was going to happen, rather than to clarify what form of visit it would be, who would be there and if a social worker would supervise the visit or not. Boddy also observed this tension around technical terms and discussed their use in policies and systems around families and children in care:

> [Terms such as 'contact', 'reunification' and 'permanence'] neglect the complex temporality of 'family' for young people who have been in care, negotiated and practised across time and in multiple (and changing) care contexts, and forming part of complex, dynamic and relational identities, and understandings of 'belonging' for young adults who have been in care (Boddy, 2018 p2).

Indeed, the findings from this thesis provide evidence of this neglect and challenge this by demonstrating the dynamic nature in which young people in foster care may construct and reconstruct relational identities and a sense of family by interpreting and re-interpreting the meaning attached to words like family. Academic discourse on family, language and meaning has focussed on definitions of 'family' within policy and practice (Edwards *et al.*, 2012) or to suggest that a search for an exclusive language of practice for children growing up outside perceived family norms, may not acknowledge the emotional and symbolic significance of their experiences (Sarah

Wilson *et al.*, 2012). I argue that the findings from this thesis move on from a systematic requirement for a common lexicon of care, to demonstrate the fluid and flexible capacity of young people in care in navigating meanings around terms such as 'dad' and 'family'. I also argue that social pedagogy could offer policy and practice developers a mechanism to revisit our understandings on the role of individual adults as upbringers; and the importance of negotiated relationships, as identified by young people in care themselves, and that are formed and maintained, in many ways, by language. I now move on to discuss the fluid nature by which young people in foster care can navigate the emotional and symbolic construction of their everyday experiences, and in so doing, develop their language and meanings for these lived experiences in care, that are not located in deficit perspectives.

8.4.2 Language and meaning for a care experienced life

In this section I discuss the important role that language and meaning play in allowing young people in care to give accounts of their lived experiences that are not located in deficit perspectives. Out with the policy and practice discourse that have seeped their way into everyday life in care and discussion around contact and permanence, are terms that can be regarded as problematic or complex, as they are shaped by an understanding located in norms of family life. For example, and discussed in greater detail in section 5.2.1, the term 'dad' presents a good example of the tension between the boys' abilities to navigate its use quite easily and other peoples' perception of what this word means to them.

At the start of my fostering journey, I was told by the social work team that 'these are not your children, you're looking after someone else's child'. This may seem like a stark or even obvious statement to the reader; and indeed, during my years as foster father I have often questioned the need for this clarification on my role. However, I had come to recognise it was part of an attempt by the social work department to develop forms of clinical distancing in what has felt like a risk averse practice in foster care in my years as a carer. However, the findings from this thesis demonstrate that rather than seeking distance, clinical or otherwise, the young people in this study

navigate language and meaning in ways which allow them to minimise stigmatisation, account for relationships and develop belonging and family on terms developed by them. In doing so, they can construct accounts of their lived experiences from positive, rather than deficit, perspectives. This does not assume that all experiences in care will be positive, but an ability to develop a positive agency in their stories was important to the participants in this study.

In addition to identifying the important role of language and meaning for young people in foster care to talk about their life experiences in positive terms; the importance of language and meaning in developing a sense of belonging flowed throughout various sections in this thesis. The exiting literature around language and belonging ranges from maintaining existing relationships with birth family (Burgess *et al.*, 2010) to the role of food in developing aspects of belonging through senses like taste and smells (Kohli *et al.*, 2010). This thesis adds a fresh perspective on the role of language and meaning making around belonging by addressing the gap in research in this area identified by McCarthy and Wilson (2012). In doing so, I argue that young people in care do not seek a new language, as in new words or terms to talk about their experiences. It is important to acknowledge that language is a negotiation on shared meanings, and care experienced young people draw the vocabulary that is available to them, to create new meanings for terms such as 'dad' and family'. This in turn, I argue, contributes to the challenge on the dominance of, and reliance upon, psychological disciplines to define positive family connections and experiences, and whether substitute families can meet the full range of emotional and symbolic needs of children in care. Indeed, the evidence from this thesis demonstrates a fundamental need to address a sociological perspective on relationships and the processes or mechanics of being raised in foster care.

8.4.3 Section Summary

In this section, I have discussed the role of language and meaning from two interlinked perspectives. Firstly, the role that policy and practice language can play in potentially marginalising young people in care; and in doing so, draw on the findings form this study to suggest an increased tolerance around the use of everyday language by

children and young people in care. Terms such as ‘dad’ and ‘family’ can be used interchangeably and fluidly by care experienced children and policy and practice should reflect this. This is echoed in the second perspective, where I call for an understanding on language and meaning making in the development of belonging for children in care. Both aspects reframe foster care away from attachment theory and a psychologised discourse towards a notion of the everydayness of lived experiences and language of life in a foster family.

8.5 Original Contributions to Knowledge

Drawing on the three discussion sections above, here I discuss the four main contributions to knowledge from this thesis. A synthesis of the existing literature, findings and discussion have developed four interconnected contributions. I begin with a discussion on single male carers and whilst it was not the aim of this study to explore my experiences as a foster carer, the data and analysis has afforded a new perspective on the role of men as primary foster carers. I then move on to a discussion on upbringing in the moment, which adds to the existing literature on long term relationships. This leads on to a section where I build on the work of Ruth Emond, to discuss how foster children navigate family identities through foster siblings. The closing section focuses on everyday life in foster care and the significance of rituals, traditions, and intergenerational relationships.

8.5.1 Single male foster carers

I acknowledge that my experiences as a single male foster carer will almost certainly not be generalisable to other male carers. Indeed, the notion that this thesis may provide a form of blueprint for male foster care, sits somewhat uncomfortably with me. However, there is a line of argument that suggests the contributions to knowledge from this thesis for single male foster carers, may be transferable to other contexts and carers (Guba, 1981), and it is for this reason that I have included this section.

According to the Fostering Network's State of the Nation's Foster Care report in 2019, there are 75,530 registered foster carers in the UK (The Fostering Network, 2019). The report goes on to state that based on their survey of 4,037 foster carers, a typical carer is aged 45-54, 83% are female and fostering with a partner (p4). This thesis contributes to our knowledge on the role of single male foster carers as upbringers and what they can offer to foster parenting. Whilst it was not the aim of this study to explore and report the experiences of a single male foster carer, I am, by mention in the research question, part of this study's data and findings. It is also not possible to say, to what extent my approach to foster care is typical of other single male foster carers. However, from the data and analysis in this thesis, I can report what aspects of upbringing feature in the boys' experiences of life in our foster family; and to what extent my role as a single male foster carer made these experiences distinctive, compared to the views of foster children discussed in section 3.3 on family and foster life. Key themes to emerge from my review of this literature, that specifically relate to the findings in this study, were the importance of maintaining forms of contact with birth family and fathers as role models.

An interesting theme to emerge from the data from the boys, was a lack of perceived parenting conflict in replacing their mother. Most of the participants in this study were living with their single mothers, prior to coming into care. My analysis suggests that the lack of a female partner in our foster family eased tensions around a need or expectation to develop a relationship with an adult female, who could be in a mothering role. Rather, the data from the section 5.2.1 *Dad in everything but title*, suggests they managed to emotionally accommodate these two parenting roles and this in turn allowed their mother to maintain her title as mum. Despite the lack of day to day living, their mother was still in role and playing her part from a distance through contact visits and her communications with and through me. This perspective of family constructs, with their mother and I, builds on Thomas *et al's* work on performance and 'doing family' (Thomas, 2017) and is perhaps unique to single male carers.

The second theme to emerge was that of family membership and role models and a rich vein of data on how the boys perceived the role of fathers. Again, drawing on

Thomas *et al's* work *Not Just Blood (2017)*, and adding to the findings of Biblarz and Stacy's study, *How Does the Gender of Parents Matter (2010)*; the findings from this thesis adds a new perspective on gendered roles and parenting. Indeed, this thesis directly contributes knowledge to the growing discourse on challenging oppressive social norms through non-gender normative models of fathering, located in forms of hegemonic masculinities (Riggs *et al*, 2010). Upon reflection at the end of the PhD process, I think I have built a male niche, as single male carer, that embraces many aspects of a pedagogue (Nentwich *et al.*, 2013). This niche was perhaps subconsciously developed in order to provide a discursive practice that legitimised my role as primary carer and, in some ways, helped me challenge societal perceptions and questions on men's motivation to care (Nentwich *et al.*, 2013).

8.5.2 Upbringing in foster care

This thesis adds empirical knowledge to a growing theoretical discourse on social pedagogy and upbringing in foster care. In addition to this, the findings from this thesis also suggest that there is a temporal aspect to upbringing that is not discussed in current theories. I have acknowledged that various cultures, language, and roles shape the boys' constructs of family; and that the boys have past, present and future lives. These acknowledgements raise the question, to 'what extent is temporality and recognition included in Mollenhauer's upbringing?'.

The data and findings from this study suggests a development of Mollenhauer's theory to include additional aspects on the importance of upbringing in the moment in addition to long term co-investment in relationships. This thesis also contributes to the idea of upbringing by a community and the role of foster carers in inducting their foster children into those communities.

The stories from the boys of life in our foster family are underpinned by my role as a long-term foster carer and an ongoing commitment to support the boys through the past challenges, present everyday life and the future that is shaped by life after leaving our home. However, it has emerged from the data that there are meaningful aspects of

upbringing located in key moments of the boys' stories. Not solely in the everyday living in our foster family but the wider institutions in their life. In section 5.4 I discussed the data that relates to the boys' perceptions of the professionals in their lives; in section 7.3, the findings on the role of sports and physical activity, and in section 8.3.3 I moved on to discuss the potential role of professionals as upbringers. The thread running through all these sections on relationships, also include examples on the importance of first contact and impressions for the boys. If one of the central tenets of upbringing is co-invested relationships, the findings from this thesis demonstrate the crucial importance on the starting point of that relationship. There are examples in the data of the boys making instant decisions on key characters, including myself. "*The first day I met you, I was like 'that is us', a bond that cannae be broken*" [Oliver]. There are extracts in the data that suggested pivotal moments when professionals were either accepted or rejected depending on that first impression or contact. Again, drawing on Oliver's data in section 5.4, the first time he met Josh, an agency worker from Aberlour, his positive and ongoing relationship started in a first contact that involved more discussion on football than foster care. Barry's stories around education and teachers provides the counter perspective, where he was disengaged by staff that he saw as caring more about classes and grades than him as an individual. As a foster parent I am tempted to highlight the fleeting nature of these instances; however, the data shows they are key in establishing the meaningful relationships that allowed for intergenerational transmission of values and beliefs (Mollenhauer, 2014). Again, as a foster parent, and in the process of writing this thesis, I am left wondering if outcomes could have gone a different way had professionals taken a different initial approach in some cases. My concerns are reflected in the work of Holland (2010), and which I have drawn on extensively in my discussion around relationships in sections (2.2.1 and 3.3.1.2):

> I would suggest that we need to ensure that children who are looked after are enabled to form and sustain lasting care relationships, with formal carers and social workers and with their informal and family networks. It seems fundamental to an individual's well-being that they may be able to envisage a future in which they will have continued caring relationships. Even where foster-carers and social workers are no longer formally part of their lives, their continued interest and concern could be encouraged (Holland, 2010).

The second key contribution in this section is a reflexive development on my role as an upbringer. Perhaps, my title as single male foster carer has encouraged me to think single parenting means single upbringer. However, the findings from this thesis have demonstrated the importance of a networked approach to creating contacts for the boys. Not wishing to muddy the philosophical waters by wandering too far from social pedagogy, this aspect is located in forms of social capital (Bourdieu, 1993; Dagkas & Quarmby, 2016). The findings suggest that in many of the first contact situations mentioned above, what the boys saw as successful relationships were almost always facilitated by an introduction by me. Therefore my role can be seen, in part, as introducing the boys into my existing networks characterised by bonding (Granovetter, 1973; Putnam, 2000). Both contributions help to locate upbringing in foster care that includes not only long-term relationships but also in the moment or specific aspects of a young person's life and not solely in the everyday life context but also in schools and in other institutional and organisational settings.

8.5.3 Family for young people in foster care

I have discussed the developed idea of belonging in all three of the discussion sections above. Here, the findings contribute knowledge to the relatively unknown aspect of care identities, and how young people in foster care navigate and talk to others about relationships within their family. Specifically, between foster siblings in one foster home and who are not related by birth. From every day experiences such as food, pets, and shared activity to the use of family language in creating belonging, this thesis adds significant empirical weight to an alternative perspective on the concept of belonging to a family, as opposed to joining an existing family unit. There is an additional perspective that has emerged from the findings in this thesis and contributes a new dimension to Emond's work on the importance of peer relationships between children in residential care (2003, 2014). The stories from the boys in this study refer to one another as central characters in linking routines and traditions to family identity. The stories also have an important genealogy of foster brothers, reflected in accounts of who sat in what seat at the kitchen table or slept in a bedroom before them. These

complex relationships between social context, action and actors (Emond, 2003), provide a notion of status and belonging for the boys in this study. Emond's study found these shifting patterns and hierarchies in residential care, this thesis contributes to an understanding of these patterns in sibling foster relationships.

8.5.4 The significance of the everyday in foster care

The findings from this study suggest that resilience, connectedness to adults and fun were important for everyday fostering and that it also provides long term protective factors. In Chapter 7, I discussed the importance of everyday aspects of daily life at home and the educative process of meaning making and shared understandings, both everyday mundane and cultural rules and beliefs. Indeed, I have discussed at length the perceived mundane activities that repeat, become habitual and may otherwise be considered invisible or unremarkable (Brannen and Phoenix 2013), and their importance to the boys in developing a sense of belonging in our family. In section 7.2.3, I discussed ritual, as a version of routine that acquires cultural value when imbued with relational warmth and meaning. For example, the stories that talk about the importance of bacon rolls, Christmas decorations and gifts on their birthday, from my parents (the boys' foster grandparents) are examples of upbringing in moments and require a revaluation of everyday life in fostering as educational (*Erziehung*) as stated in section (8.5.2). The findings on rituals, traditions and activities provide empirical evidence on the significance of intergenerational relationships and everyday life in foster care, as theoretically developed by Cameron *et al* (2016).

8.6 Implications and recommendations

In order to discuss the implications for policy, practice and further research from this study, I first revisit the premise underlying the need for my study:

> Upbringing is not an abstract notion but involves being with and taking responsibility for children. Professional discourse around upbringing needs then to be located not with psychologists, social workers, children's rights advocates or a burgeoning child protection industry, but with those engaged in the day-to-day care and education of children. (Smith, 2013)

Accepting Smith's call to move upbringing beyond the theoretical discourse of the professions around young people in foster care, in this section I discuss the potential implications for policy practice and further research, developed by this study, not only as a researcher, but as someone involved in the day to day care of fostered adolescents. In doing so, I also make my recommendations in each of these areas within each section. I begin with a discussion on policy and introduce the Scottish Independent Care Review (ICR), which was published just prior to the submission of this thesis in 2020.

8.6.1 For Policy

In this section, I discuss the implications and recommendations for policy that emerge from the findings in this thesis. To begin with, I draw on the recently published Independent Care Review (ICR) of Scotland's care system. Conceived as a cross political party review of Scotland's care system, and carried out over four years, the members of the ICR spoke with 5,500 care experienced people, professionals working in the care system and local and national policy makers (Independent Care Review, 2020). It is beyond the remit of this thesis to fully analyse and discuss the detail within the entire review. Here, for the purposes of focus, I discuss the recommendations from the review that this thesis may make some contribution towards in foster care.

Within the review's seven reports is *The Promise*, which sets out the ICR's aims and recommendations for change across the care sector in Scotland. The Promise is followed by six subsequent reports, such as *The Plan*, *The Money* and *The Rules*, all of which address the suggested mechanisms for change and how this should take place. I have focussed on The Promise, as it is too early to know what extent these recommendations will be received by policy makers and practitioners and acted upon. However, there are aspects of the ICR's aims that resonate with the findings in this thesis. Central to both ICR and this Thesis, is the importance of relationships.

> It is clear that Scotland must not aim to fix a broken system but set a higher collective ambition that enables loving, supportive and nurturing relationships as a basis on which to thrive. (Independent Care Review, 2020 p6)

Central to this thesis' contribution to knowledge is an understanding on the importance of relationships for young people growing up in foster care, especially in autonomy and agency for adolescents and the role of upbringers in their lives; and in doing so, to challenge some of the existing systems' reliance on risk avoidance at the cost of experiential learning in the development of these meaningful relationships. *The Promise* states:

> Overcoming trauma requires a foundation of stable, nurturing, loving relationships. Scotland's focus and understanding of risk must shift to understand the risk of not having stable, loving, safe relationships. For above all else the Care Review has heard it is that children want to be loved, and recovery from trauma is often built on a foundation of loving, caring relationships (Independent Care Review, 2020 p16).

For the adolescents in this study, love was not mentioned explicitly, however, as discussed in Chapter 5, genuine relationships were key to what they saw as a good life and in challenging stigmas around a life in care. The importance of care stories, not located in deficits, is discussed in section 8.4 and is at the heart of the Review's observation on care experienced young people's needs. *The Promise* states:

> Children who can no longer live with their family of origin may have complex or distressing aspects to their life story. They must be supported to understand the narrative of their lives in ways that are appropriate and have meaning for them' (Independent Care Review, 2020 p69).

Finally, in this brief overview of the ICR, focus is given specifically to foster care and foster carers in Chapter 4 of *The Promise*. A full list of the implications and recommendation from the review on foster care is provided in (Appendix H). Here I review two key aspects within the report that relate to this study. Firstly, 'Foster carers must always be recruited on the basis of their values' (Independent Care Review, 2020 p77), the passing on of which, is core to upbringing as used in this study; and 'Rules, regulations and payments must align to allow young people to stay with foster carers (if that is what they want to do) for as long as is required' (Independent Care Review,

2020 p78). This second recommendation is at the heart of belonging and is demonstrated within the boys' stories on remaining part of our family, through traditions, support and relationships, long after the rules and legislation suggest an end is possible.

During the period of this study there has been a shift towards continuing care and a right to remain in residential and foster care until the age of 21. Indeed, the latest legislation, the Continuing Care (Scotland) Amendment Order 2019: Consultation, places a duty on local authorities to provide continuing care under section 26A of the 1995 Act and states the age 21 as the upper limit. The previous amendments from 2015 to 2018, excluding children in care born before April 1999 as ineligible for continuing care. This thesis moves this line of argument along and provides evidence that care should be provided and funded until the young person and their foster family jointly decide that independent living is the plan, rather than an age specified by legislation. This is echoed in the ICR's aims for care experienced young people, 'When young adults move on to independent living or need to return to a caring environment, all decisions must be made in their best interests and not on the strict application of age criteria' (ICR, 2020 p92). Whether the need to remain with or return to the foster family fold is needed, social work systems and policy should facilitate rather than provide barriers to such needs.

8.6.2 For Practice

As an adult involved in the day-to-day care and education of my foster sons, I have drawn on Smith's observations, quoted in the introduction to this section 8.5, on the development of upbringing as an approach that should be located in discourses around foster carers, to help me define my role within the boys' life. Foster carer recruitment has, to some extent, traditionally focussed on finding replacement families. A mother and father, and perhaps with children of their own, that can welcome a foster child into their family. However, in the late twentieth and at the start of the twenty-first centuries, perception on 'who might make an appropriate foster carer have changed in some ways, largely in line with shifting and broadening notions of acceptable domesticity'

(Musgrove, 2014 p175). Perhaps one of the greatest implications for this study is the opening of a dialogue on men in primary caring roles. Looking beyond traditional two parent families and efforts to join family or establish a sense of belonging for care experienced children. Whilst it is not my intention to advocate for any forms of positive discrimination in carer recruitment, leaning towards single carers, I sense there are implications, indeed possibilities, for family models that may suit certain adolescents; and where becoming family could outweigh issues, tensions and deficits associated around joining one. As mentioned in the previous section on policy recommendations, there is scope to visit the values of carers, as the primary criteria for recruitment, rather than the context of existing family set up and ideas around preconceived roles such as mother and father. In addition to meeting the needs of children that may indeed require a replacement family, a broadened vision on potential upbringers for young people in care, may help maintain placements and develop meaningful relationships for those that do not wish a replace their birth family. Both perspectives can and should influence the recruitment and training of foster carers.

In addition to my discussion on relationships with professionals in the lives of care experienced young people in section 8.3.3, there is scope developed by this thesis to broaden the view of adults outside of families as upbringers. I have already discussed the importance of recognising the agency and ability of young people in care, making decisions on who may or may not be an upbringer in their lives. If this perspective is to be given credence, it will require a level of awareness, training and support for adults in this role. If, for example, a young person identifies a teacher or sports coach that fulfils the role of upbringer, then education systems, sports bodies etc should work towards supporting these relationships, for both the young person and the adult, that allows this to happen safely for both parties. The tensions in this recommendation will be in workload, role descriptions and safe caring for both. If, for example, a young person identifies a subject teacher as someone meaningful in their life, the current default may be to develop a relationship with support or guidance staff rather than subject teachers. However, given the small number of children in care, there should be further research to explore this role expansion.

An ability to talk about lived experiences in care from a positive rather than deficit perspective is another central tenet of this thesis' findings. This requires equal address in my recommendations for practice; an aspect that is also addressed by a key aim of the ICR, which states:

> The way in which support is delivered must not stigmatise the family. That means there must be no uniforms, lanyards or branded vehicles appearing outside houses or schools to provide support. The basis of all support must be the quality of relationships, not the professionalisation of the workforce. The language of family support must reflect normal discourse, and not be hidden behind professional language such as 'looked after child' ("LAC"), reviews and risk assessment. Overly professionalised language stigmatises families and acts as a barrier to engaging and supportive work. (Independent Care Review 2020, p58)

My final recommendation for practice is the need for both education and social work systems to engage with the discourse around social pedagogy. From the initial training of professions such as teachers and social workers, to continued professional development, there is a fundamental need to embrace the aims and philosophies developed within social pedagogy, and in particular, Mollenhauer's notions on upbringing, in order to facilitate our care system getting it right for these children. I now move on to discuss the implications and recommendations for further research.

8.6.3 For Research

The focussed nature of my investigation in this study and my arguments in defence of an insider epistemology, discussed in section 4.5.1, will naturally have a counter position. I argue that this study contributes an important perspective on a gap in knowledge and offers insights on key relations for children growing up in foster care. There remains a requirement for studies privileging the perspectives of young people in care on their upbringing, however, these should address other care settings, such as kinship and residential care. In addition, in section (8.3.3) I discussed the potential to consider the key professionals in the boys' stories as upbringers. The data in sections on the boys' perceptions of (5.4) their relationships with professionals and (6.4) on the values held by these professionals, offered some insights into the development of

knowledge of professionals as upbringers. Further research is required to specifically explore this aspect and to broaden the net from Cameron *et al*'s focus on social work, and move on to teachers, sports coaches and club volunteers that may provide a relationship for care experienced young people. In order to develop a broader understanding on the role of upbringing in care, as developed by care experienced young people themselves, further research is required.

There is one other limitation within this study that is bound in the research timing. Like many foster families, during the study, we had placement changes and some of the boys left and new family members joined. In order to complete the PhD, I had to establish a start and end point for the data collection, and this resulted in two regrets, or perhaps missed opportunities. Firstly, although mentioned by other boys' in the study, Sam had originally opted out of participation and of course, I respected his decision. He was the youngest in the house at the time I started, and as the years progressed and discussion around the table about my thesis and my progress or lack of it in stages, I became aware that Sam seemed to be missing out on the process of taking part like the others. It was only in the closing stages and my write up that he was now 16 and seemed to regret not being included in the story. Secondly, during these closing stages of my study, our family were joined by two unaccompanied minors who were trafficked to the UK. In the time since becoming part of our family, I've come to the realisation that their input could have added a rich insight to the data, and what it means to grow up with a single foster father with a different ethnicity.

In terms of this study's specific methodology, I have become increasingly aware of its unique design. Although I have found studies on family members as researchers (Adler & Adler, 1996), and whilst they offered some comforts on the advantages of an 'insider' epistemology, they have presented some tensions for me in their empirical claims. For example, the Adler's suggested it was possible to adopt, and to some extent bifurcate, their roles as parents and researchers. I found this claim to problematic, as my foster sons would see through such attempts as fraudulent. Instead, I have embraced my role as foster father and researcher, openly discussion the tensions present in as reflexive a dialogue as can be given. However, I am keen that these

tensions do not overshadow the potentially significant contribution my methodology and research design could offer to research discourse.

8.7 Final reflections

In my thesis, I have aimed to contribute to an emerging critique on the dominance of psychological disciplines, such as developmental and behavioural psychology in discourses around parenting. A psychologization of parenting affords systems and professions a discourse that allows for measure on potential impacts and outcomes of a life in care; however, it offers no insights or perspectives on how to 'do' everyday care or how young people in care make sense of their lived experiences and the processes involved for them in living in care; indeed, psychological discourses can reify 'normal' or 'ordinary' family, which in turn can propagate deficit perspectives of a life in care that deviates from this. This thesis has explored the lived experiences of young men from one foster family to suggest a sociological perspective, and the processes involved in upbringing, as a more accessible perspective to talk about and understand the everyday experiences and relationships within a foster family.

Carrying out this study has been insightful, reflexive and on occasion, a little 'too close to home'. Yet, I believe this proximity is part of the study's core strength. Working with foster children who were not part of my family, could have provided some interesting insights on upbringing and, as I have recommended above, further research is needed to provide this facet of knowledge. However, my sons and I have undertaken this study to open the discourse on meaning making for care experienced young people. To begin a process that allows for care experienced young people to talk about their lived experiences, without the need to apologise or locate this discussion in deficit terms. Through some significant life challenges for my sons during the years of the study, I am perhaps most proud of one aspect. Throughout, I have privileged my identity as foster father over that of PhD candidate. It has taken me a little longer than most to complete my thesis, but this delay and sacrifice has allowed me to continue to support and invest in my relationship with them.

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Appendices

Appendix A Cameron et al's (2016) Understandings of upbringing.

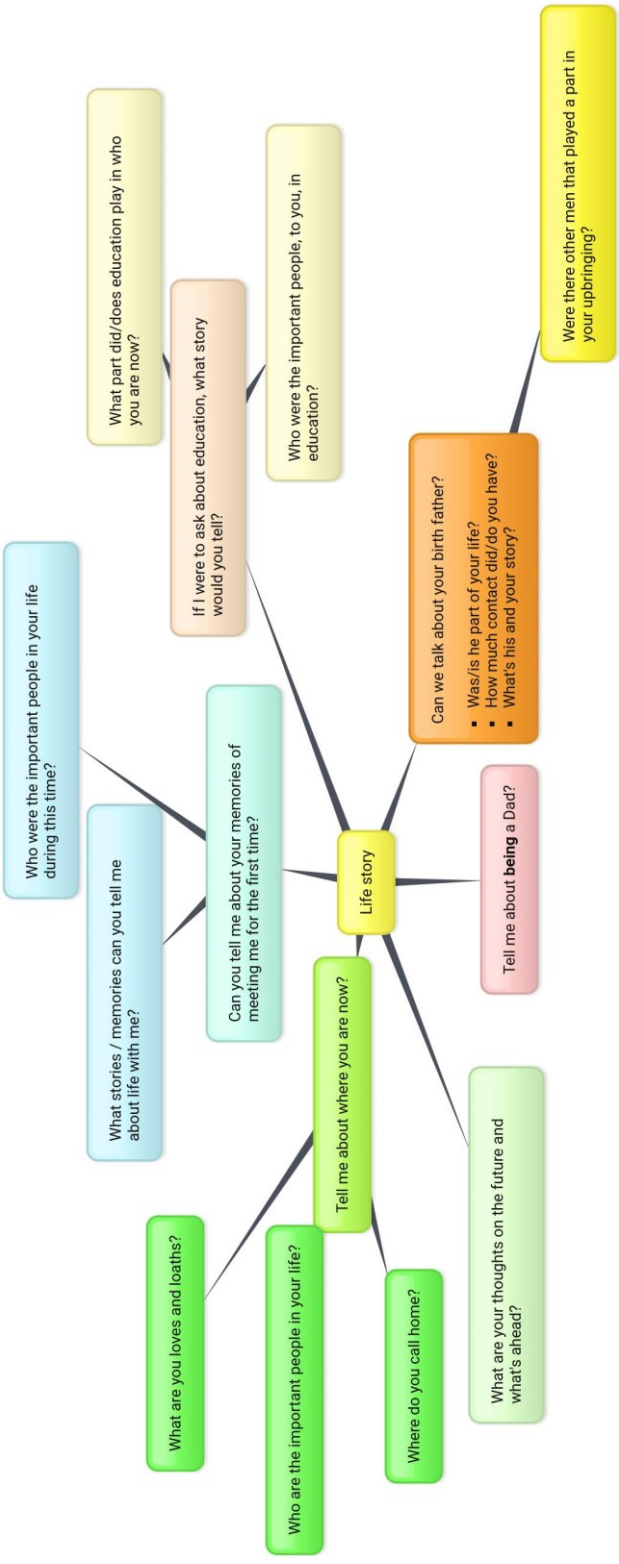
Table 3. Understandings of upbringing in relation to children in foster care.

Welfare regime type	Country	Upbringing and role of the state/foster care
Liberal	Scotland	Broad understanding of state's role with children in care [Social work (Scotland) Act 1964]; Current policy *Getting it Right for Every Child* sets out a broad framework in which to locate upbringing, based around themes or well-being indicators of age, healthy, active, nurtured, achieving, respected, responsible and included. *Curriculum for Excellence* sets out broad vision of education focusing on the development of the whole person in a social setting. Applies to all children, not just those in foster care.
	England	Research on foster care shows how different it is from birth family life but upbringing in foster care rarely discussed. About 40% of placements planned as longer term, with the aim of 'care and upbringing', and these were mainly for children and young people who had been looked after for more than three years. Four main roles of foster carers: (i) supplementing family care/ respite or short breaks; (ii) offering treatment using structured programmes; (iii) providing complementary families/ kinship care; and (iv) long-stay foster care. The term upbringing is used alongside 'care' to refer to longer term childhood spent in care, but its meaning and remit is rarely explored. The societal dimension of upbringing as related to integration into communities and fulfilment of normative social goals is particularly underdeveloped in child welfare.
Conservative familial	France	Most widespread approach is therapeutic rather than linked to upbringing.Institutional task includes 'upbringing in terms of behaviour, values, knowledge'. Can be 'co-education' with the parents. Law refers to parents' participation in upbringing while separated but professionals believe total separation should be an option.
	Germany	Research conducted with young adults who were fostered as children suggests that the role of foster carers in upbringing is to provide the resources to enable upbringing on behalf of society—and these resources include helping young people cope with difficulties in their past lives and birth families, with their 'strange' position in the family and social milieu, with breaks and disruptions in their lives, with their needs for material goods.
	Austria	Foster carers are social parents who fulfil a service for the child. The service is legally fixed and limited in time; biological parents have a right of visiting and information. Attachment/ care viewed as more important than erziehung/education in the quality criteria in the foster child system. The 'providing of family like relationships seems to guarantee a developmentally supportive growing up of children. The processes of erziehung and bildung don't seem to need any further explanation'.

Cont./

Welfare regime type	Country	Upbringing and role of the state/foster care
	Switzerland	Child welfare is organised at a very local level where the priorities are set according to cost; there are no national figures available other than estimates; no national quality assurance systems; no clear criteria for placing children; and lack of specialist professionals with expertise and knowledge who are members of the politically appointed guardianship authorities/ committees and who govern child protection and placement. It follows there is no agreement on what the role of upbringing is in foster care.
Social democratic	Denmark	Danish legislation about children in care relates to individuals in order that their needs are met so as *to give them the same opportunities for personal development and growth as their peers*. The family upbringing is a model for social pedagogy both in foster care and at residential care centres—based on the individual understandings of children and young people's special needs.
	Sweden	No specific mentions
Central and eastern European	Croatia	Little professional discussion of experience and roles with regard to children's welfare/social pedagogy. Constant state of transition inhibited development of knowledge base in child welfare. Social welfare law (2012) 'child has a right to placement with the purpose of care, upbringing, education, habilitation or psychosocial rehabilitation'. Juvenile Court Act (2011) purpose of intervention is to 'educate and influence on upbringing, personality development and strengthening personal responsibility'.
	Poland	No information on upbringing within state care
	Lithuania	Civil Code of Lithuanian Republic (para. 3.155) states goals of foster care are: 'certain child's upbringing and look after in the environment that is good for safe bringing up, development and improve'.

Appendix B My conversation guide for narrative interviews



Thesis Mud List (First)

Original Knowledge

Data to Support ™

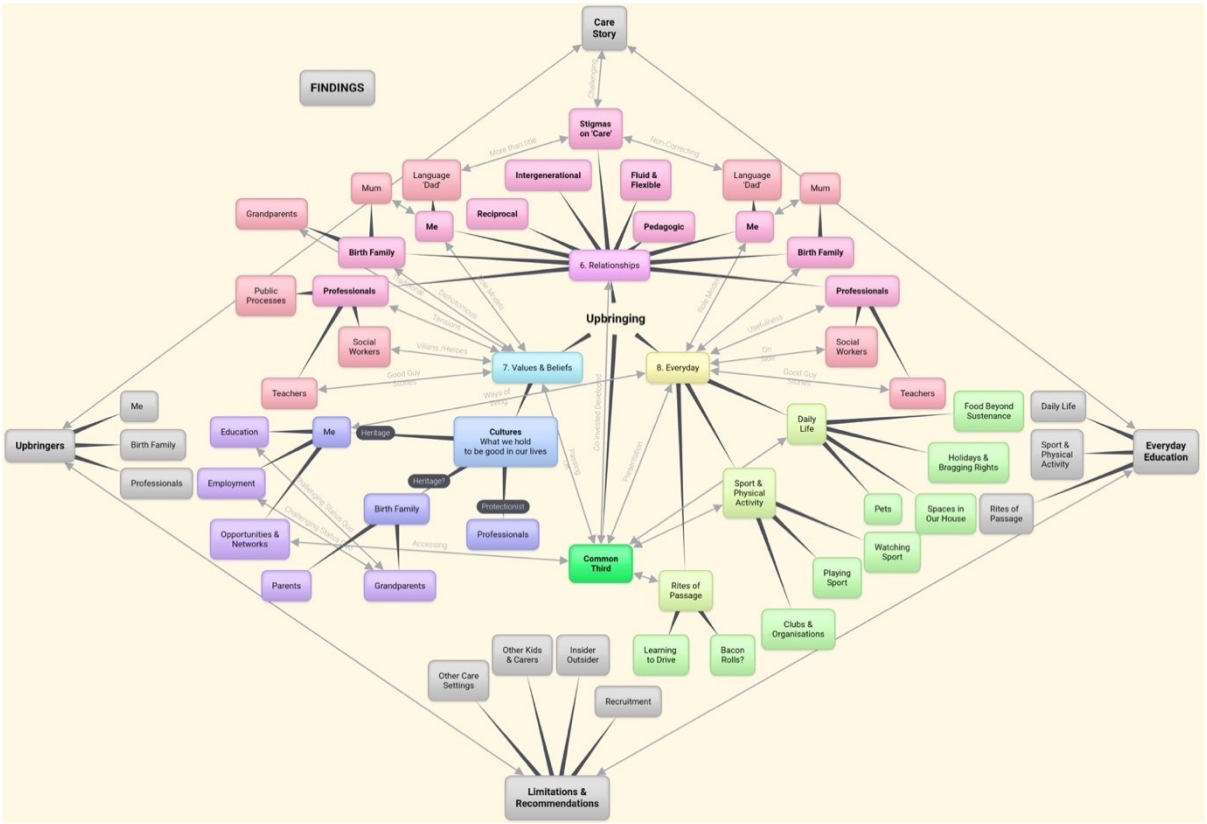
Not sure I can claim Ø

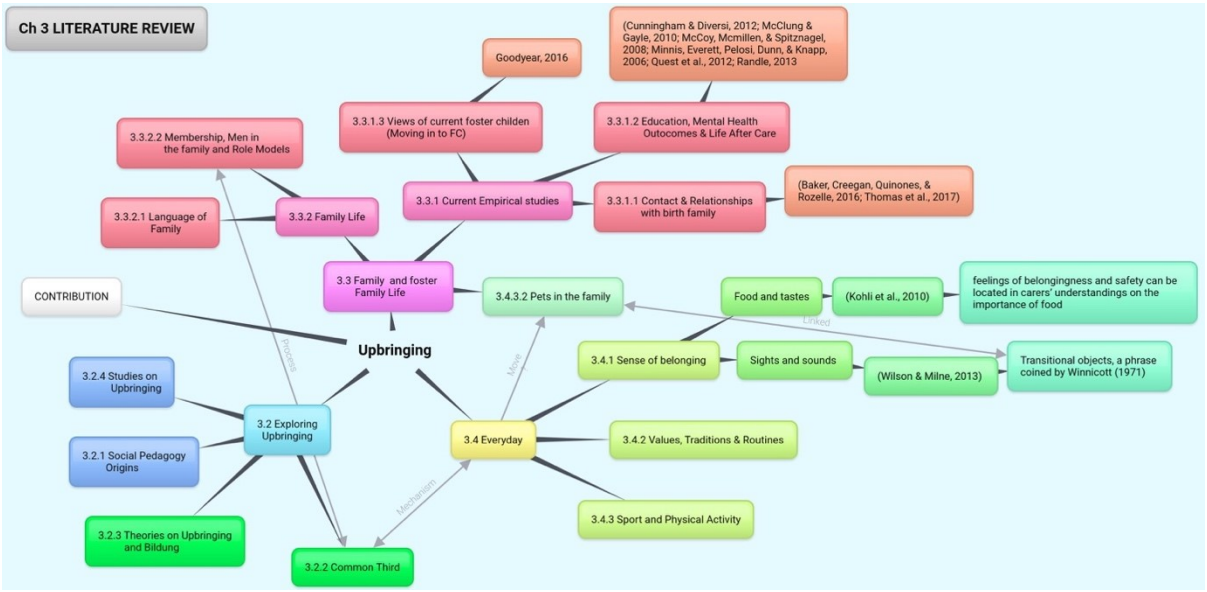
- SP / Upbringing / *Erziehung* provides a lexicon for people to talk about life / experiences in care (caring for) that move beyond a deficit perspective / position. ™
    - Belonging rather than not belonging
    - Part of rather than added in (limit - perhaps just us? Me having no partner or kids) ™
    - Fluid Family / Family in more than one place (No challenge to mum, more of an addition to birth family) ™
    - The importance of all relationships beyond family (teachers, social workers and coaches) ™
    - The importance of accessing networks ™
- Single carers present parenting opportunities rather than deficits
    - Challenging current discourse on two parent ideals
- Carers as advocates Ø
    - Between families and systems
    - Between family and family
- Representation – a way of living as a family / together Ø
- Merging some family values - Grandparents and me – to produce a new model
- New ways of looking at opportunities (Education and Employment) resetting (Ctrl Alt Del) any ideas around existing trajectories / self-fulfilling prophecies (Dad did so I do). Our foster family offered space / capacity / opportunity to do this.

- No mention of secure, avoidant, anxious or disorganised attachments to me (or any other language variants of these).
    - Relationships are fluid and flexible ™
    - The boys navigate belonging through everydayness ™
    - The boys navigate belonging in their teens and beyond, no age limits Ø
    - Upbringing is a less stigmatic was of accounting for imprinting and allows for a co-relational development intergenerational relationship. ™
    - + I have changed as a person, with every relationship (reciprocal relationship development … more reflexive than data) Ø

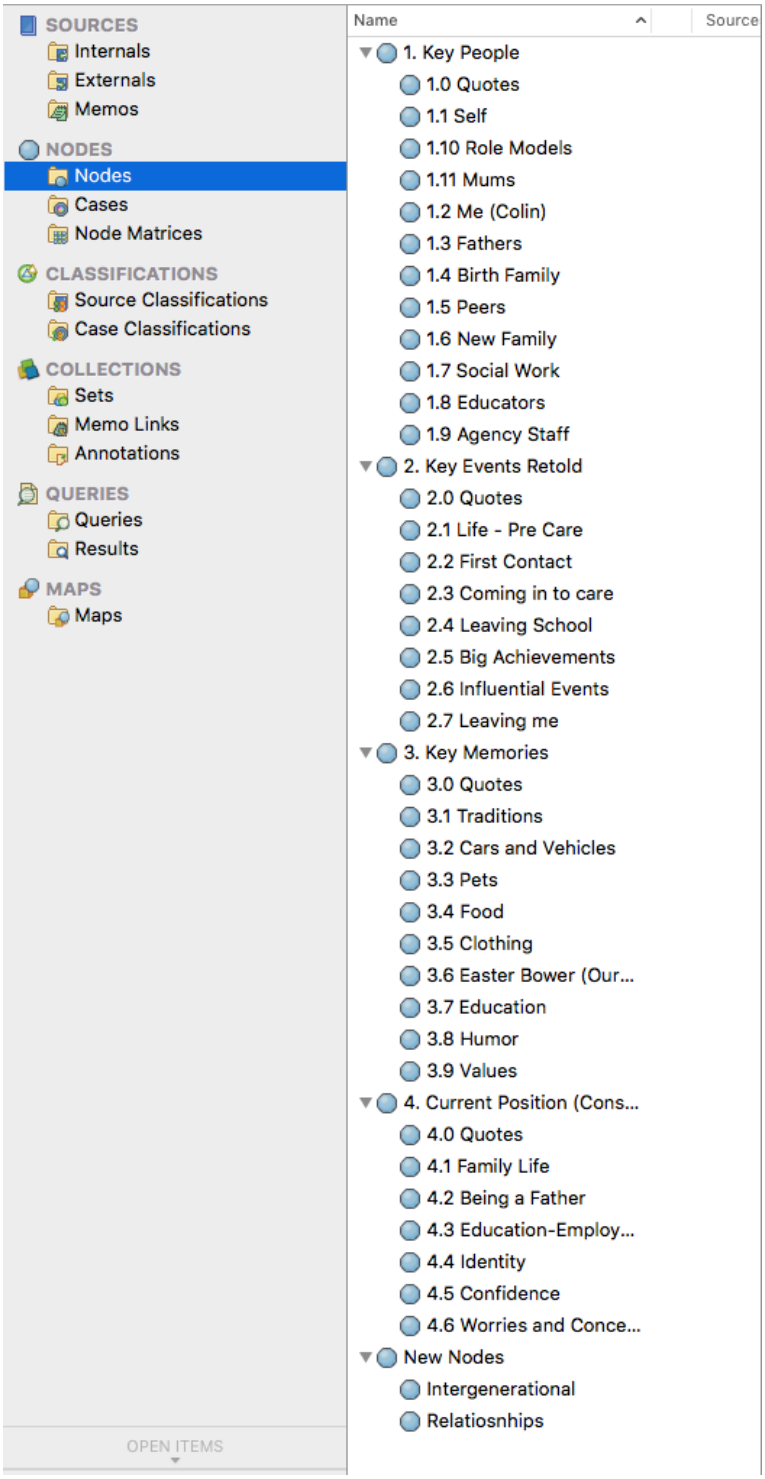
- Everyday life is key to upbringing ™
    - Foster carers key role in marshalling exposure and access to everyday:
        - Life at home ™
            - Food, cooking and eating together
            - Sharing and valuing family spaces
            - Dogs as equal family members
        - Family holidays and trips ™
            - Experiences worth bragging about ™
            - Added self-worth ™
        - Sport and physical activity
            - Beyond health and into networks and shared learning
            - Community membership and acceptance through season tickets and watching together ™
        - Rites of passage ™
            - Self-worth and esteem developed in learning to drive ™
            - Continued wider foster family membership through traditions and open remaining doors. ™

Appendix D Mind Maps for Analysis





Appendix E NVivo Coding List



Appendix F Local Authority Research Application Form

·EDINBVRGH·
YOUR COUNCIL – YOUR SERVICES

Children and Families
Research Access Questionnaire

Introduction

The City of Edinburgh Council Children and Families Department has a policy of evaluating all requests for research access made to the department or any associated agency.

This is intended to co-ordinate research proposed, or being carried out, within Children and Families services, and will ensure that:

- service user / carer interests and confidentiality are safeguarded
- excessive demands on staff time / resources are avoided
- research design and methods are robust, and appropriate for a study in a Children and Families related environment.

When access is requested in relation to:

- interviews with service / user and / or carers - involving direct face-to-face contact
- interviews / surveys with service users and/or carers - involving telephone contact, postal / email contact
- scrutiny of service user / carer personal files or other confidential documents
- interviews / surveys staff - involving face-to-face contact, telephone contact, postal / email contact.

Researchers must provide:

- **information sheets** for potential participants: These should give a brief description of the purpose of the study, and be designed to take account of participant characteristics (e.g. sensory, cognitive or physical impairment)
- **consent forms** for potential participants: These should give an account of what the person is being asked to do (e.g. be interviewed, fill in form); provide details of how confidentiality will be safeguarded; let people know that they can withdraw from the study at any time.

This material should be 'customised' to meet different user group requirements so that people signing the forms are giving 'informed consent'. There may be instances where a carer is invited to sign on behalf of a client - these situations will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

- **survey forms** or **interview schedules** to be used in study
- **a proforma** detailing items sought from confidential files where access to client documents is requested
- **a report, or executive summary,** of study findings. Feedback to the agency and participants on completion of a study is very important. Not only can it supply useful perspectives on service use / delivery, it encourages individuals to remain, or become involved, in the research process.

The Procedure

When your completed application is received, your proposal will be considered by the Information and Research Team. A recommendation will then be made to the relevant Manager in the department. You will be informed as soon as possible of the decision.

Please return your completed questionnaire and address any queries to:

Research Access Requests
Research and Information Team
Children and Families
City of Edinburgh Council
Level 1/3 Waverley Court
4 East Market Street
Edinburgh
EH8 8BG
Tel: (0131) 469 3363
Email:stuart.osborough@edinburgh.gov.uk

July 2014

1. Research Details

(a) Name of Researcher: Colin Brough

(b) Designation: Mr

(c) Agency / Educational Establishment: University of Edinburgh

(d) Address: Moray House School of Education, Holyrood Road, Edinburgh, EH8 8AQ

Daytime Tel. Nos.: 0131 651 6378 / 07899 725412

(e) Which Agency / Individual is funding your study? Self Funded

(f) Are you carrying out this research to fulfil a course of study requirement? (•) Yes ( ) No

If 'Yes', what is the course of study? PhD Education

(g) Are you a City of Edinburgh employee? ( ) Yes (•) No

2. Clearance

(a) Have you submitted your proposal elsewhere? (•) Yes ( ) No

If **'Yes'**, where? University Ethics Committee

(b) Has it been accepted? (•) Yes ( ) No

(c) Do you intend to submit the proposal elsewhere? ( ) Yes (•) No

3. The Project *(Please complete this section about your proposed project.)*

(a) Project Title:

What do the stories of boys and young men form one foster home, tell us about their upbringing with a single male foster carer.

(b) Overall Aim of Project:

I aim to explore the stories told by the boys and young men I have fostered over my years as a foster carer. I intend to analyse these stories through the lens of social pedagogy in order to gain insight in to their upbringing by a single male foster carer.

(c) Background to the study:

I am in a unique position, as both foster carer and researcher, to explore the stories told by current foster children and those that have been in my care. The research holds both methodological interest,in terms of an insider epistemology, as well as the temporal aspect of the stories told by young men that were in care with me.

(d) What methodology is to be applied?

Located within an interpretivist insider epistemology, I will be using narrative analysis to gain insight into the boys and young mens stories. There are aspects of auto-ethnography, although the study is not about me, I will be part of the boys narratives. I'm hoping to look beyond the existing dominance of

July 2014

attachment theory and to explore the narratives through social pedagogy and 'upbringing' in particular.

4. Particular relevance or request to the City of Edinburgh Council:

This research is context specific within it's population and sample. As I am both a local authority foster carer and a researcher.

5. Value to the City of Edinburgh Council:

There is a significant body of literature on the role of attachment theory in foster families. I aim to understand what part upbringing, with a single male foster carer, plays in the boys development whilst in care and post care as individuals, and in some cases, as fathers themselves. I hope to inform, foster carer and social work education and training, social pedagogy and practice around matching and placements.

6. Children and Families Involvement

(a) Children and Families **Staff** Involvement

Please state, as specifically as you can:

- the type of Children and Families staff
- the numbers of Children and Families staff you want to contact
- how much of their time will be needed
- when you need to make contact
- the nature / purpose of the contact.

An **example** is shown below - please try to provide equivalent information about your proposal.

Example 6(a)

Children and Families Staff Group	Number(s)	Purpose / Nature of Contact	Time	When
Residential Care Staff	6	Informing residents (and relatives where appropriate) about the study and supporting those who wish to take part.	2-4 hours	Late May

	Staff Group	Number(s)	Purpose / Nature of Contact	Time	When	
						x

Add row

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(b) Children and Families **Client** Involvement

Please state, as specifically as you can:

- the type of Children and Families client
- the numbers of clients you want to contact
- how much of their time will be needed
- when you need to make contact
- the nature / purpose of the contact.

Example 6(b)

Children and Families Client Group	Number(s)	Purpose / Nature of Contact	Time	When
Young People in Residential Care	10	Taking part in face-to-face interviews	One hour per interview	Late June

Client Group	Number(s)	Purpose / Nature of Contact	Time	When
Young People in Foster Care	1	Under 18 in placement with me	One Hour Intreview	December/ January
Young People in Foster Care	2	Over 18 in placement with me	One Hour Interview	December/ January

Add row

(c) **Other Group** Involvement

Please state, as specifically as you can:

- the type of other group(s)
- the number of other group(s)
- how much of their time will be needed
- when you need to make contact
- the nature / purpose of the contact.

Example 6(c)

Other Group	Number(s)	Purpose / Nature of Contact	Time	When
Relatives of Young People in Residential Care	10 - 15	Taking part in telephone interviews	15 minutes per interview	Late June

Other Group	Number(s)	Purpose / Nature of Contact	Time	When
		col63		

Add row

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7. On what basis have you arrived at the estimates you have given in 6(a)?

- [ ] Pilot Study
- [x] Own Estimate
- [ ] Advice
- [ ] Research elsewhere

If **'Advice'**, from whom?

8. Information sought

(a) What is the nature of the information (and/or records) to which access is sought? (Please explain as fully as possible.)

From the Social Work Department:

No records are require form the department.

From Research Subjects (if applicable):

Consent will be sought from all those asked to participate. Including the 14 young men who are no longer in care. I have a permanence order with the 12 year old in care with me. I need 'parental' consent from the department before asking him if he wishes to take part. Agency and the decision to participate or not was discussed at length in the ethics application process of the University. The decision to allow his inclusion was based on his agency and an aim not to exclude him from the study.

(b) How will this information be used?

The data generated will be disseminated in a PhD Thesis. All participants identities will be made anonymous.

(c) How will this information be stored (manual files / computer systems etc.) and for how long?

Audio recorded interviews will be stored on the Universities Own Cloud system (servers located within the university and designed specifically for research). Transcripts and thesis chapters will be stored here as well.

(d) If applicable, please include a copy of your research design / questionnaire to support your proposed research, and tick the box below. (This will normally be necessary **before** approval can be recommended).

Questionnaire enclosed? ◯ Yes ◯ No

9. Confidentiality

What assurances can you give relating to the security of confidential information collected relating to clients, staff or premises?

(a) Within **manual** records / files etc.?

Although I aim to work entirely digitally, should manual versions of transcripts be required, they will be kept in a locked office within the University and destroyed using a confidential shredding service.

(b) Within computer systems?

My Mac is password protected with full disk encryption and in order to ensure that any data collected will be backed up and secure I will be utilising the Edinburgh University Data Sync service which works in a manner similar to drop box , but offers additional security, as any and all data saved using this service will be stored on the University owned, datastore servers .

(c) What assurances can you give, that clients, staff or premises would be non-identifiable in any published material?

Beyond the use of pseudonyms, I am using the work of Peter Clough and fictional narratives to disguise participants identities.

10. Report

(a) When is your final report due? **August 2016**

(b) Will a copy be sent to this department prior to publication? *(To: City of Edinburgh Council, Department of Children and Families (address as shown previously)).*

(●) Yes ( ) No - a summary document can be made available.

11. Additional Supporting Information

Please use this section to add any further information which you feel would assist us in consideration of your request, or enclose supporting information with your completed form.

Both Scott Dunbar and Gordon Harper (liason worker) are aware of my role as foster carer and researcher. They are aware of the study and its aims (Scott less so) but both should be able to provide a reference.

12. Research Agreement

(a) I confirm that the above details are correct and that I will inform Children and Families if there is any change to the proposal agreed.

(b) I confirm that if there is any disagreement over the interpretation of the results that this will be noted in any publication.

(c) I agree to comply with all applicable requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998 under the auspices of Section 33 of the Act.

(d) I also confirm that a copy of the research report will be provided to Children and Families prior to publication (unless other arrangements have been agreed.)

(e) I agree that the following items can be published on the City of Edinburgh intranet (Orb).

- [x] The Research title
- [x] My name
- [x] The Research request approval date
- [x] Name of Agency / Educational Establishment
- [x] An abstract of the completed study (or a full document to be available)

Researcher's Name: Colin Brough

Researcher's Signature: _____

Date:

July 2014

Information Sheet

The Project

As you will know from our telephone conversation, I am working on a project that hopes to begin to understand what it means and has meant to be brought up by a single male foster carer. Over my time as a foster carer, I've looked after seventeen boys and young men and you are one of them. I hope to talk with as many of the seventeen as I can, both those who were with me on respite and those that lived with me for a longer term. I hope my research will help others, such as social workers, teachers, foster carers and other young people in care, understand something about life in care.

What's involved?

It's pretty simple really. I'd like to meet with you and talk about your story. It's all about your memories of life with me and as much of your life story before and after life in care with me, which you would like to share. It's your story and I'd like to hear it. Ideally, I'd like to meet twice over the next few months. At the first meeting we can catch up and talk about some of areas that were, and are, important to you. At the second meeting, we can talk about things that were common to all my kid's stories and if you have any questions or things you want to talk about. These meetings will be about two months apart.

Each meeting should last around an hour and a half and I'm happy to travel to wherever you would like to meet. I'd like your permission to audio record our meetings so I can write up notes later, so ideally somewhere quiet, but we can arrange this nearer the time.

Who will see and hear my story?

The audio recordings will only be available to my supervisors, Gale and Mark, as well as myself. I will use fake names in the notes and when writing my thesis, so you cannot be identified.

Looking after you and me during the research

The things you tell me in the interview will be reported anonymously, I will want to use what you say to write up my research, but I won't tell anyone that it was you who said it. The only time that might be different would be, as always when we talk about things, if you tell me something that makes me concerned about you and I think I might need some help working out how to support you, then we can talk about who else we can share it with.

What if I don't want to take part?

That's OK. There is no pressure for you to take part. I value your decisions as much as I value your story. Nothing will change for you and me.

If I want to take part, what do I do next?

If you are happy to take part, then I'll contact you to set up a suitable time for us to meet. I'll ask you to sign a form that says you're happy to be a part of the research and for me to use your story in my project. If you change your mind about wanting to take part at any time, that's OK, just let me or one of the people listed on the bottom of the next page know.

What do I do if I want more information?

If you have any questions about the project or have any worries during the project, you can contact any of the people listed at the bottom of this page.

Thanks

Colin

Contacts

Colin Brough
Moray House School *of* Education
The University *of* Edinburgh
Thomson's Land Rm.1.10
Holyrood Road
Edinburgh, EH8 8AQ
07899 725412

Dr Gale MacLeod
Senior Lecturer: School *of* Education
Dean (Postgraduate Taught)
College of Humanities and Social Science
The University *of* Edinburgh
Simon Laurie House Rm. 2.14
0131 651 6448

Dr Mark Smith
Senior Lecturer and Head of Social Work
The University *of* Edinburgh
School *of* Social and Political Science

Gordon Harper
Senior Practitioner
Family Based Care
Westfield House Social WorkCentre

Chrystal MacMillan Building
15A George Square
Edinburgh, EH8 9LD

Tel: 0131 200 4000

Consent Form

'Life in care with Colin'

Please tick if you agree

Colin has explained the purpose of his research and I understand what being part of it would involve for me. I am over 18 and I would like to take part in the research. ☐

Participant Name ……

Signature …….. Date ……

Foster Care
The Care Review has heard about a wide range of fostering experiences from care experienced children and young adults. For some, foster care has been a positive place of healing through relationships that become a family. For others, it has been temporary, disruptive and where children have felt the monetisation of their care and excluded from parts of the foster family's lives.

Scotland must better support its foster carers to be the best parents. Foster carers must feel valued, cared for and supported to care.

- Children must never again feel the monetisation of their care. They must be included in a meaningful loving way within the foster family without barriers. Rules and regulations must support the full inclusion of children with the life of foster families.
- To ensure that children living in foster care receive all that they need, foster carers must know that their primary purpose is to develop nurturing, patient, kind, compassionate, trusting and respectful relationships that so that the children in their care feel loved and safe
- Foster carers must always be recruited on the basis of their values.
- Recruitment of foster carers must also explore the range of community support they need to make sure it can be made available to them.
- Children must be supported to have a range of relationships in the community that mirror family life: local grannies, aunties or uncles must be part of the overall picture of recruitment.
- When deeply traumatised children need caring for, it must be recognised that foster carers may experience secondary trauma on the basis of the pain the children they are caring for have experienced. Scotland must make sure that these children get the very best care by providing ongoing support and space for reflection for foster carers to continue to care without becoming overwhelmed or inured.
- Foster carers must have access to all the support they need to care and avoid 'crisis' point interventions to help them continue to support children in their care and this must mirror the ten principles for intensive support for families. Read more at Chapter 3: Family.
- To provide the care that children require, foster carers must be sufficiently financially maintained.

- Levels of payment must not determine where and who are the best people to care for a child.
- Rules, regulations and payments must align to allow young people to stay with foster carers (if that is what they want to do) for as long as is required.
- Children report that it is often their foster carers who know them best, when that is the case they must be included in all relevant decision making.
- Scotland should consider a national register for Foster Carers recognising that they care for children within their own home. That must operate in a supportive way that is aligned to the underlying values of how Scotland must care.